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November 26, 1902.

Jo. Baileys
Book for pre.
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N. E. Feb. 21. 04

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upon 2 Tim. 1. 3. secret prayer - p. 127

SOME
Important Truths
CONCERNING
Conversion,
And the
Improving Seasons of GRACE;
As also about
PRAYER in Families, and in Secret:
Delivered in Several
SERMONS;

By Mr. INCREASE MATHER.

The Second Edition.

Joh. 13. 17. *If ye know these things, happy are you if you do them.*

Phil. 3. 1. *To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*

Printed at Boston in New-England by
Samuel Green for John Griffin. 1684.

T. Prince. Boston. 1720. 1^s. 6^d

Recd Dec. 9. 1862

9781



To the Reader

I*T is thought Convenient in a Prefatory Line or two, to Advertise the Reader, that the Discourses which are a Price to get Wisdom, now put into his hands, are such as have heretofore seen the light among divers others a kin to These, in two several Books of this Worthy Author, whose Labours have praised him, as otherwayes; so by the good success of them, in which, no doubt, he has seen the fruit of his Soul-travels, to satisfaction; And though the Treatises from whence these are Gleaned are by some intended to be Reprinted elsewhere ere long; nevertheless the Republication of These, in this little Manual (tis hoped) is not amiss attempted by sundry who have been desirous to promote Pure Religion among those that stick not to purchase*

To the Reader.

purchase and peruse a small one, while they are affrighted at larger Volumns.

Wherein also they presume that the Reverend Author himself from whom they had no encouragement to do This, will not be displeased, because his own Grand Aim when he first emitted these Important Truths, namely, The Conversion, and Edification, and Salvation of never-dying Souls, is that on the score of which this New-Impression is accomplished; And let the Blessing of Heaven go along therewith!

A Sound



A Sound and Through Conversion, is
of absolute necessity in Order to
the Souls Entrance into the King-
dome of Heaven.

Matth. 18. 3.

*Verily, I say unto you, Except you be Con-
verted, and become as little Children, you
shall not enter into the Kingdome of Hea-
ven.*

THese Words were spoken by the
Lord Jesus Christ; the occasion
of them we may see in the first
Verse of the Chapter; viz. An
Ambitious Enquiry amongst the Disci-
ples, which of them should be the greatest
Man, or have the greatest Dominion in
the heavenly Kingdom of Christ: The
Lord tells them in this Verse, that such
Ambition was not the way to Heaven;
but on the contrary, that if it did continue

unmortified, it would surely exclude them out of that Kingdom.

In the words we may take notice of three things: 1. The main Truth which is here affirmed, *sc.* That Conversion is of absolute necessity, in order to obtaining the Kingdom of Heaven, *Except there be Conversion*, or (which explaineth the other) *except there be a becoming as little Children*, even a *Regeneration*, and beginning the World *anew*, as it were, *except there be this*, there shall be no entring into the Kingdom of Heaven. 2. We have here the Persons unto whom this was spoken, *sc.* the Disciples of Christ; *Except [you] my own Disciples be converted*, I say to [you] that [ye] shall not enter: not but that they were converted already; yet this may well be spoken, even to converted persons, thereby to convince them further of the necessity of that Conversion which they had already attained. Also, because though they were *converted* in respect of their *state*, yet they stood in need of a further Conversion, in respect of a *particular ill*, which they were too much under

is of absolute necessity, &c.

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under the present prevailing power of. And this sheweth, that all men whatsoever are concerned in the truth delivered: For if it be true concerning Disciples of Christ, that they must be *either Converted, or not saved*, certainly this is true, *concerning other men.* 3. We have here the manner of the expression. This Truth is not barely affirmed, but with a *Verily*; Christ doth not only say, but pronounceth it with a *Verily*, saying, *Verily, except you be Converted, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; which noteth both the certainty and the solemnity of the thing expressed. This word [*verily*] was frequently used by Christ, yet never but when there was some weighty and solemn truth affirmed by him. The *Doctrine* therefore which we shall (by the Lords assistance) speak unto from the words, is,

That it is a most certain and weighty Truth, that a sound, through Conversion, is of absolute necessity, in order to the Souls entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

4 *A sound and through Conversion*

In the Doctrinal prosecution of this point, we shall attend two things : First, we shall lay down some Propositions for clearing and opening the Truth about Conversion. Secondly, we shall demonstrate the Truth by Argument.

1. The Explication of the Truth, may be set before us in sundry Propositions.

Propos. I. *God is the principal cause and Author of that Conversion which is here spoken of.* The words indeed may be rendered, *Except you Convert*; but that sheweth rather mans duty, than his power to convert himself; I say, God and not man is the principal cause of this work. Hence converted persons are said to be *born of God, and not of man*; because not man, but God alone is the Author of Regeneration, *Joh. 1. 13.* therefore it was that *Ephraim* prayed, *TURN thou me, and I shall be turned, Jer. 31. 18.* as if he had said, *Except the Lord turn me, the work will never be done.* And God doth this by his holy Spirit, therefore a converted person is said to be *born of the Spirit, Joh. 3. 6.* and, *born after the Spirit, Gal. 4. 29.* And the Spirit

is of absolute necessity, &c.

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Spirit of God is called, the *Spirit of Grace*, *Heb. 10. 29.* because all Grace, and especially *Converting Grace*, is from him : The truth is, that as Conversion is taken for the infusing of a *new Principal* of Saving Grace into the Soul ; so men are altogether *passive* in their *Conversion*, and the Eternal Spirit is the only principal Agent therein. Hence *Conversion* is called, a *new begetting*, *1 Pet. 1. 3.* Now in begetting, the thing begotten is not active but wholly passive : and it is called a *Resurrection*, or *quickning of a dead person*, *Eph. 2. 1. Joh. 5. 14, 25.* Hath a dead man power to raise himself out of his Grave ; or is it in the power of Men or Creatures to quicken those that are dead ? much more may we say thus as to dead Souls, that are buried in a Grave of sin, guilt and misery : yea, in *Converting a Soul*, there is a *Creating power* put forth, *Col. 3. 10.* which sheweth both that the Soul is passive in this work ; and also, that it is above the power of Men or Creatures to accomplish. Creation is a bringing of something out of nothing : Now inasmuch, as there is a kind

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of Infinite distance between Being and No-being ; therefore an Infinite power is required, to produce a work of Creation. So is it in *Conversion*. Nay, that's harder than meer Creation : because in the first Creation there was no opposition : But now when God enters upon this work of the *new and second Creation*, there is whatever resistance all the powers of darkness can make against him. Look, as it is an easier matter to make a new Glass, than to mend a broken one ; so it is easier to create a new Soul, than by Conversion, as it were, to *make anew* the broken, ruined Souls of men.

Propof. II. *The Word of God is the Instrumental means of Conversion*, James 1.18. *Of his own will begat he us, with the word of Truth.* God is (as was said) the principal Cause, but *the Word of truth* is the Instrument and Mean in the hand of the Spirit, whereby this mighty and astonishing work is brought to pass, *Pfal. 19. 7. The Law of the Lord is perfect converting the Soul.* The word of the Law, strictly taken, is partly Instrumental and influen-
tial

tial to the Souls *Conversion*. For thereby is *Conviction* of sin and misery, *Rom. 3. 20.* *By the Law is the knowledge of sin.* If a man cometh to see and acknowledge himself to be a sinful and miserable Transgressor, this conviction is by means of the Law. The *Ceremonial* Law was a plain conviction and evidence of the guilt of sin. Hence it is called, *the Hand-writing that is against us*, *Col. 2. 14.* because it was as it were, a Bill of Indictment against the Observers of it: the *Jews* when they observed Circumcision, did thereby confess themselves guilty of Original Sin, which is the sin of nature; and when they offered any Sacrifice, they did thereby acknowledge, that they deserved to be dealt with, as they did unto that creature which was sacrificed by them; yea, to be made an Eternal Sacrifice to Infinite Justice. And the *Moral Law* doth convince of sin. When that in the holy nature and exact purity of it, is brought home to the Soul, Conscience is convinced and awakened thereby, with the sense of transgression and guilt. Hence the Apostle saith, *Rom.*

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7.9. *I was alive without the Law once*: He speaketh of what he was, when in his natural, unconverted estate; before the Law was effectually brought home to his heart, he was alive in his own conceit: *But when the Commandment came, I died*; when God set the Law, in the spiritual nature of it before him, then his Conscience was touched indeed, that he saw himself to be by nature, no better than a dead and damned creature: Now *Conviction* of sin is the way, and indeed the first step towards *Conversion*. But especially the Word of the Gospel is the great means of Conversion: Hence it is called, *The ministration of the Spirit, and of life*, 2 Cor. 13. 6. because it is the mean by which Spiritual life is conveyed to the Elect. The Law without the Gospel will never Convert: Hence men that have been strangers to the Gospel, have been unacquainted with the mystery of *Conversion*, all their knowledge in the Law notwithstanding. The Gentiles notwithstanding the Internal Law written in the heart; and the Jews notwithstanding their knowledge of the

Ex-

External-Law, yet were strangers to true Conversion, because they knew not the Gospel in the power of it. The Law without the Gospel, will but drive to despair, and to set the sinner farther off from God, but will never bring him home to God again : It is also true, that God doth many times bless Providences, Afflictions especially, to help forward the Conversion of his Elect ; but that is, by causing them thereby to mind and remember what the Word saith, *Affliction maketh a sinner to think of Christ*. But how came he to hear of a Christ, or to know that any help is to be had for his Soul ? This knowledge is by the Gospel ; so that still it remaineth true, that the Word is the principal Means of Conversion.

Propos. III. *In true Conversion, the Soul is turned from Satan, the World, Sin and Self*. In all changes, there is the term from which the change is : now the Proposition is expressive of the term from which the change in *Conversion* is wrought. There are four Particulars comprehended under this ; we shall briefly touch upon each

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each of them as they go along: 1. The *Converted Soul* is turned from Satan; therefore when *Paul* was Instrumental towards the *Conversion* of the *Gentiles*, he is said to turn them from the power of Satan, *Act. 26. 18.* and when the *Disciples* were sent forth to Preach the Gospel, and thereby to *Convert the World*, Satan is said to fall before them, *Luk. 10. 18.* *Conversion* is the same with effectual vocation: Now in *Vocation*, the term from which the Soul is called, is *Satans Kingdom*, *1 Pet. 2. 9.* *He hath called you out of darkness*; namely, out of the dark Kingdom of Satan. 2. From the World; therefore Christ said to his Disciples after their conversion, *Ye are not of the World, I have chosen you out of the World*, *John 15. 19.* Sin doth carry away the Soul from God to the creature; but now in conversion, it is taken off from the creature again; as we see in *David*, *Psal. 119. 96.* *I have seen an end of all perfection*: his heart was taken off from the creature, so as he did not look for his happiness there: The like we see in converted *Paul*, *Gal. 6. 14.* *I am crucified to the World,*

is of absolute necessity, &c: II

The World, and the World unto me. The World was as a dead object before his eyes, which is unlovely and undefirable. 3. From *Sin*: Oft in Scripture, conversion is called *turning from sin*, *Isai: 59. 20: Jer: 26: 3:* and a *breaking off from sin*, *Dan. 4. 27:* and a *casting away transgression*, *Ezek: 18: 31: Isai 31: 7:* yea, it is a turning from all sin, *Ezek: 18: 21, 30:* Herein especially conversion doth consist; namely, in a true turning from sin; that is, *when the life and heart is thoroughly divorced from every false and evil way.* Men may confess sin, yet if they do not forsake it, this is no conversion, *Prov: 28: 13:* They may forsake sin in their lives, yet if there be a love and liking unto any lust in the heart, there is no true conversion. But of this more afterwards. 4. The converted man is turned from *Self* also: This is the first, and indeed one of the hardest Lessons in Christianity, that a man must *deny himself*, *Mat: 16: 24:* A natural man, maketh not only the World, but *Self* his God. He maketh *himself* his own *Last end*: He *liveth to himself*; but the converted man doth

doth not so. Herein is a main matter in Conversion, and that wherein the Truth of the work is discerned, namely, when the Sinner is indeed unbottomed from Self, especially from *righteous Self*: and Conversion doth imply a work of *Humiliation*, which is that whereby the Soul is taken off from resting in righteous Self: Some there are that attain unto a seeming, and as it were, an half-conversion, but here they stick and perish; they do in part forsake the World and Sin, but then they go to duties and righteousness of their own: But in true Conversion, the Soul is taken off from this bottom also. Hence *Paul*, after his Conversion, could say, *not having my own righteousness*, Phil. 3.9. He did renounce all that was his own; not only his own Sins, or his own Will, or his own Relations, so far as they stood in opposition to Christ, but his own Righteousness and all.

Propos. IV. *In true Conversion, the Soul is turned to God in Christ.* In all changes there is *the term to which*, as well as *the term from which* the change is. Thus
in

is of absolute necessity, &c.

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in Conversion, the former Proposition was expressive of *the term from which*; this is expressive of *the term to which* the Sinner is changed: we have them both mentioned, *Act. 26. 19.* where the conversion of the Gentiles is called, not only a turning *from Satan and Darkness* but *unto God*: Therefore it is said of *John Baptist*, that he should *turn many of the Children of Israel unto the Lord their God*, *Luk. 1. 16.* because he was instrumental towards their Conversion: God went forth with *John Baptists* Ministry to the conversion of many Souls, therefore he is said, *to turn many to the Lord*: and very often *Conversion* is called, *a turning to the Lord*, *Deut. 30. 10. Hos. 12. 6.* *Conversion* is an undoing of the work of Sin; Sin is a departure from God: So *Conversion* is a going to him again. Hence the converting Prodigal said, he would *go to his Father*, *Luk. 15. 18.* by these two parts, or terms, is the whole nature of *Conversion* described; see *Isai. 55. 7.* *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous Man his thoughts.*

These

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These words are expressive of the first part of Conversion ; *sc.* when the sinner is turned from evil, and that not only as to his way, or outward conversation, but in his own thoughts, and inward disposition of heart; it followeth, and *let him return to the Lord*——*To our God* : These words are expressive of the other and positive part of Conversion. Moreover, this turning must be to God in Christ; for true conversion is an *Evangelical* work; Though a Man should repent with legal Repentance, and turn to God in a legal way, this is *no Conversion, if Christ be not turned unto, and God, even the Father in him.* The Jews did thus return, yet they converted not, because they sought God *out of Christ*, Rom. 9. 32. Hence *Conversion* is called, a *seeking of Christ*, Hos. 3. 5. and *Converted ones* are described to be such as are in Christ, Rom. 16. 7. Paul there saith, *that his Kinsmen Andronicus and Junius were in Christ before him*; meaning that they were converted before him, Christ, Gal. 3. 27. and to have put on Although there are many that call themselves Christians, that know

know not what Conversion means, yet a true Convert, and a true Christian, are the same: Conversion doth imply *Faith in Christ*. It hath been a great Question amongst some, *Whether Faith or Repentance be first wrought*; and a great deal of disputing there hath been about this point, which might have been spared. The true and plain Answer is, That as Repentance is taken for the first part of Conversion, so it is in order of Nature before Faith, though in Time with it: *The term from which*, is in order of Nature, before the *term to which*; but as Repentance is taken for the whole work of Conversion (as oft in Scripture it is) so it implieth Faith in Christ. You heard but now, that *conversion* and *vocation* are the same; now in *Vocation* the *term to which* the Soul is called, is the *Kingdom of Christ*, Col. 1. 13. This Text doth intimate, that *Converted ones* are brought into the *Kingdom of Heaven*; and it must needs be so, because in Conversion, *the term to which* the Soul is brought, is *the Kingdom of Christ*; now that is meant by *the Kingdom of Heaven*, even

even the *Heavenly Kingdom of the Messiah*: Christs Kingdom, and the Kingdom of Heaven are the same.

Propos. V. *True Believers on Christ may undergo a farther, and as it were, a second Conversion.* This is plainly (and indeed a main thing intended therein) intimated in the Text ; Christ here tells his own Disciples, that except they were converted ; *i. e.* except there were a farther, and as it were, a new conversion wrought in them, and upon them, they should not see Heaven. There is an universal conversion, and a particular conversion : one in the state of nature, needs the former ; a true Christian may stand in need of this latter. This may be secretly hinted at by that expression, *Jer. 4. 3. Plough up the fallow ground of your hearts.* Fallow ground you know, is such as hath been once broken up already ; but by reason of its being overgrown with weeds and thorns, &c. may need a further and new breaking up. So it is here, they that have had their hearts truly broken up for sin, may become *fallow ground*, so as to need that

that new furrows should be made in their Souls : They may be so overgrown with the weeds of sin, as that the Plough-share of Repentance must again break up their hearts. Conversion is sometimes taken for a *spiritual habit* infused into the Soul, so it is not to be reiterated ; for the habit of Grace wrought in the first Conversion, is never lost. Sometimes it is taken for *an act* proceeding from that habit : Thus a Man may be converted over and over again ; yea, thus a Christian is converting all his life long ; that is to say, he is still getting farther off from sin and the world and nearer unto God in Christ ; the life of a Christian is and ought to be a life of Faith and Repentance. Hence even true Believers yet are called upon to repent : So we find in those Epistles which the Lord Jesus sent from Heaven to the Churches, they are commanded to repent that is, to *renew their Repentance*. And this truth is evident, in that a true Child of God may be too far subject to the prevailing power of some special corruption, in which case, a new or further conver-

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tion is requisite. This was the case of the Text; the *Disciples* were under the present predominancy of an ambitious Lust, in a great measure, therefore the Lord tells them, *they must be converted*. The like we find, in respect of another corruption in that good Prophet *Jeremiah* see *Ch. 15. 19.* *Thus saith the Lord, if thou return t'en will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me*: You may see, in the former Verle, that the good man was surprised with a pang of Unbelief; and while the temptation and corruption prevailed upon him, he manifests much impatience and murmurings of Spirit: Now saith God to him, *if thou wilt return from t'is evil frame of Spirit, if thou wilt convert thee from these evils, then will I again make use of thee in my service, &c.* So that a very good man may be distempered with particular corruptions, so as to need a returning and converting from them to the Lord again. Yea, it is a sad Truth, that a godly man may possibly be under the present power of some corruption, in such a degree, as that it is impossible for him

him to get to Heaven until that corruption be further mortified. This is plainly affirmed by the Text, Christ declareth to his Disciples, that except the lust of Pride were further mortified in them, they should not enter into Heaven. Some sins which true Believers are guilty of, they must and shall repent of them before they go out of this World, that so they may be fit for Heaven.

Again, Grace may be exceeding weak in a true Believer, and in that case a further Conversion is necessary: Ordinarily it is thus with *new-Converts*; in such many times Grace is very weak, and corruption is very strong; there is little knowledge, & much ignorance; little humility, & much pride; thence a further conversion must be. This we see in the Disciples themselves, a long time they were marvelously ignorant, and yet too full of Pride and other Corruptions: but after the Ascension of Christ, there was a mighty change wrought in them; *Then was that accomplished upon them, which here Christ said must be, a new Conversion*, they were

endued with power from on high, Luk. 24. 49. The Lord from on high poured his Spirit mightily upon them, and thereby were they wonderfully changed: The change which was then wrought upon the Disciples, was not much less, than that which was wrought on them at their first Conversion; they differed from what themselves were afore, well nigh as much as at their first conversion they were made to differ from other men.

Again, true Believers may be under sad spiritual *decays*, and in this respect they may need, as it were a *new Conversion*. This we see in the collapsed Churches of *Asia*; yea, a godly man may fall into gross sins, such as wast and wound the Conscience, and break communion with God; indeed into any sin, though never so vile, except only that sin against the Holy Ghost, and final Impenitency. Now in this case a new conversion is necessary; we see instances hereof in *David*, Psal. 51. 10. after his fearful fall and miscarriage in that matter about *Uriah* (for that, as the Title sheweth, was the occasion of his pen-

penning that Psalm) he prayeth, that God would *create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit in him*: He speaketh as if all the work of conversion were to begin anew again. And in Solomon, His *penitent Soul* wrote a *Book of Repentance*; *Ecclesiastes* is the Book of Solomons Repentance, not of his first but of his second Repentance. And another Instance hereof we have in *Peter*: Hence Christ said to him, *Luk. 12. 32. When thou art converted, &c.* Peter was converted before that time, but Satan so far prevailed upon him, as that by the sudden surprizal of a temptation, he became guilty of Lying and Perjury, and (which was worst of all) denied Christ too: Now in regard of this fearful fall into sin, he stood in need of being, as it were, *converted anew*; therefore Christ said to him, *When thou art Converted*, meaning, when he should have repented of his grievous Transgression. Besides all this, the truth of what you hear is evident, if we consider the several steps of Conversion; e.g. A true Believer may undergo a new work of

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Conviction and Illumination; God may teach him that which he hath not yet seen, *Job* 34.32. he may have further Visions of God, and Visions of his own heart too, yea such discoveries, as may differ in degree, as much from the enlightnings received, when first Illuminated, as the knowledge of a man differs from the knowledge of a Child, *1 Cor.* 13.11. and he may undergo a new work of *Compunction or Contrition* for sin. Hence *David* after his fall complains of *broken bones*, *Psal.* 51.8. because his sin occasioned and caused as much grief to him, as if all his bones had been shivered in pieces. And *Solomon* found his Vanity in the end of it, *more bitter than death*, *Eccles.* 7.26. And *Peter*, when his Conscience was touched with a saving remorse for his Sin, *went out and wept bitterly*, *Mat.* 27. ult. So for *Humiliation*, a true Believer may undergo that work anew: We see it in *Job*, after the sinful distempers of his Spirit had broke loose, he crieth out against himself, *I am vile*, *Chap.* 40. *Ver.* 4. And inasmuch as his Repentance and Humiliation was

not

not altogether so deep and through as should have been, the Lord speaketh more awakingly to him, until he cry out a second time, *I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes*, Chap. 42 6. And the like we read concerning *Hezekiah*, 2 Chron. 32.26. *He humbled himself, for the pride of his heart*; not but that he had humbled himself for that and other sins many a time, and many a day afore that time, but then he renewed his *Humiliation* before the Lord. and a further work of *Conversion* may be wrought upon the Believer, in respect of *Separation from sin, and amendment of life*. Thus also with *David* Psal. 119 67 *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word*: not but that he made Conscience of his ways from his youth up, but that affliction was a means to make him more circumspect and exact in his walking before God. So the *Corinthians* after that humbling Providence about the *Incestuous Person*, were much reformed, 2 Cor 7.11. Also in respect of closing with Christ, a true Believer may fall as it were, under a

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Second Conversion: we therefore read, *that the Disciples believed*, Joh. 2.11. the Disciples believed before, otherwise they had not been called Disciples, but now they renewed their closing with Christ. So that the Holy Spirit doth sometimes go over the work of Conversion in all the steps of it, in the hearts of his Children, and that again and again; yea, and sometimes he doth all this in a very eminent manner.

Propos. VI. *In the true Conversion, there is a change, even of the whole man.* The sanctifying change wrought in Conversion must be proportionable to the defilement of natural corruption. Now that's total, what the Prophet speaketh, concerning that woful defection and corruption of the Jewish state, *Isai 1.6. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it but wounds, and bruises, and purifying sores.* may truly and fitly be applied unto the corrupted estate of all men by nature. This corruption of nature was Typified under the Law by the spreading Leprosie (*Lev. 13. 12, 13.*) which covered all the skin

skin of him that had the Plague, from his head even to his foot. Now the Plaister must be answerable to the sore; therefore inasmuch as the corruption of nature is universal, as to all parts and faculties; so must Repentance and conversion be universal. Hence a true Convert is said to be a new, and another creature, 2 Cor. 5. 17. *If any man be in Christ he is a new Creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.* In conversion, Heaven and Earth is new; that is to say, all is new from the top to the bottom; it's such another change as that, which shall pass upon the World at the last and great day: indeed, then the materials shall be the same, but there will be a wonderful alteration as to qualities; so it is when a Soul is converted. As if a man should deface a deformed Picture, and in the room of it should draw another compleat and beautiful; here the subject matter is the same, only here's a new Image. Thus the holy Spirit draweth the blessed Lines of the Image of God on that Soul, where once was the deformed Image of Satan

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Satan. But to evince the truth of this Proposition, by Induction of particulars:

1. In Conversion, *the head is made new*. A true convert hath a *renewed mind*, Eph. 4.

23. Hence conversion is in the Scripture called, *Illumination*, Heb 10. 32. and, *opening of the eyes* of the Soul, Act 26 18. Eph.

1. 18. Whenever God converts a Soul. he lets in a new, and a blessed light into the Understanding, that the sinner hath other apprehensions about God, and Christ, and Heaven, and Sin, and Hell, and spiritual Objects, than once he had. Every con-

verted Sinner may say, as the man that was born blind said, after Jesus Christ had healed him, Job 9 25. *One thing I know that wherein I was born blind now I see.*

Some that are truly converted, cannot tell exactly the time, or the means, or manner of their Conversion; yet this they know, that now they see spiritual things with another kind of sight and apprehension, than once they did. The truth is, that conversion doth begin here:

As in the *first Creation* God began with *Light*, so in this second and new creation,

the

the Lord begins with effectual Conviction and Illumination. 2. In Conversion, the heart is made new, *Ezek. 36. 26. A new heart will I give.* Converting Grace is promised to the Elect under that expression. *A new heart* is given to a man, when that heart which once was hard and senseless, is become soft and tender; *when an heart of stone, is turned into an heart of flesh*; and when that heart which once was full of nothing but Pride and Vanity is become humble and meek. And when that heart which was foolish is become spiritually wise, *Prov. 10. 8.* The Heart is oft in Scripture, put for the Will; because it is the seat and subject thereof; as the head is of the Understanding. Now in Conversion, the will is wonderfully changed, *Psal. 110. 3. A willing people in the day of thy power*; when the day of Gods power doth pass upon the Soul in converting Grace, the Will is captivated. The Will then refuseth old sinful Objects which once were delighted in; and instead thereof, chuseth new and better Objects: That Will which before obstinate
and

and rebellious, is now become pliable to the will of God in every thing. You see it in *Paul*, when he was in the pangs of the new birth, *Lord*, saith he, *what wilt thou have me to do?* Act. 9. 6. And this alone proveth the truth of the proposition before us; for a change of the heart or Will, infers a change of the whole man; the reason is, because the will is the Empress and Commandress of the Soul. Hence the *act* of any faculty or part belonging to a man, is not to be accounted the *act* of the whole, except the will be involved in it. 3. In Conversion, *the affections are renewed*: A sincere Convert doth not affect those evils, which once he did affect; and doth *affect* those good things which once he did not *affect*: converting Grace causeth a marvelous change upon the affections; e.g. If we speak of Love and Hatred, when a sinner is converted, these *affections* are much altered and placed upon new and other Objects: He loveth spiritual good things in the chief place; he loveth God and Christ above all, *Psal* 33. 25. *Luk.* 14. 26, he loveth Truth,

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Ordinances, Saints, Holiness, as such, which the Natural man doth not; he hateth sin, and that universally, *Psal.* 119. 128. *Prov.* 8. 13. he hath an *heart after Gods own heart*, *Act.* 13. 22. that is to say he doth love the things which God doth love, and hates the things which God doth hate. Again the sincere Convert hath new joyes and sorrows in his Soul. As for the natural man, his chief joy and delight is in some carnal, worldly object, either in the Pleasures, or Profits, or Honours which the World affords: But as for the converted man, his chief delight is in Spiritual Objects; as in the favour of God, and communion with him by Jesus Christ, and in the precious promises, &c. yea, he finds more sweetness in one good look from God in Christ, or in one Promise, than in all that the whole Earth can afford, *Psal.* 4 6. & 94. 19.

So for Sorrow; the greatest sorrows of a natural man are upon the account of some worldly cross or disappointment; but the converted man is grieved most of all with the loss of Gods favour, *Psa.* 30. 6.

and

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and with the dishonour done to Gods name in the World, *Psal.* 119. 136, 158. as to *intellectual and rational sorrow*, Sin is the matter of greatest grief unto his Soul especially those sins which before Conversion, were the most delightful, after conversion are the greatest bitterness of Soul. Again, where there is true *Conversion*, there are new hopes and fears; his hopes are placed chiefly upon eternal Objects, upon Christ, and Heaven, and Eternal Life, *Col.* 1. 5, 27, and the like may be said concerning his Fear, it is not placed so much upon temporal, as upon spiritual and eternal objects. I do but touch at things as we go along; but by this you see, that converting Grace makes a wonderful change upon the affections; yea, upon all the *affections*, whether they be *affections* of Union, or *affections* of Aversion. 4. In conversion, there are new thoughts put into the heart; and if there be a real and through change, in *respect* of the thoughts, it is a special evidence of true Conversion, *Isai.* 55. 7. An unconverted sinner, or one that hath only a
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common work of Gods Spirit upon him, may possibly make some Conscience of his *Words* and outward *Actions*; but its rare for such an one to look narrowly and diligently to the inward thoughts and workings of his heart; but where the Gospel prevaileth to a sound Conversion of the Soul, it brings *every thought* into *subjection* to the Will of God, 2 Cor. 10.5. The sincere Convert will not allow himself so much as in vain and unprofitable thoughts, *Psal. 119. 113. vain thoughts do I hate*; much less in proud thoughts, or unclean thoughts, or revengeful thoughts.

5 In conversion, there is a great change wrought, in *respect of words*: It is therefore sometimes expressed in the Scripture, by the *Circumcision of the lips* And by that phrase, of a *pure Language*, 2 Cor. 3. 9 The same man that before his *Conversion*, was, it may be, a Reviler of good men, a scoffer of godliness, a prophane Swearer, or a filthy speaker; after his conversion, you shall hear no more such evil communication from him; but instead thereof, he will be speaking about Christ, and Heaven, and

and the estate of his own immortal Soul; and be full of gracious, edifying discourse; such a mighty change doth converting Grace work, when it cometh in power. And certain it is, that except a mans lips and language be sanctified, he is a stranger to conversion, and to the power of Religion or Christianity, *Jam. 1.26* *If any man seem to be Religious, and bridleth not his tongue, he deceiveth his own heart, his Religion is vain.* Men may call themselves Christians, and yet have unbridled tongues; and they may think to be saved, because of their Profession of Christianity; but alas, they deceive themselves, and all their pretences to Religion will prove a vain thing, if they have not a *pure Language.* 6. Where there is Conversion, *there is new life and conversation, Ephes. 4.22. Rom. 6.4.* He that is converted doth, as it were, turn over a new leaf, and leads a new life, quite differing from what he formerly lived. And this is that which is especially signified by the word [*Conversion:*] The word is a Metaphor taken from a man, that is walking in a wrong way

is of absolute necessity, &c.

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way; but if ever he would come to his journey's end, he must turn quite about, and go in a contrary way to that, which at present he walketh in. Men by Sin turn out of the right way; sinners are perverters of their way, but by Repentance and Conversion they return and are brought back into the right way again, *Jer. 3.21,22.* The true Convert walketh in new wayes, and taketh new courses: he did walk in the way of sin, he doth walk in the way, which is called holy; he did walk in the broad way, he doth walk in the narrow way. 7. Where there is Conversion, there will also be a *change in respect of company*: As a new Conversation, so a new Company to converse withal, *Prov. 13.20.* We see a sudden and marvelous change, in this respect, wrought in *Paul* at his first conversion, *Act. 9.26.* before his Conversion, he delighted in the company of none but carnal *Jews*, but after his conversion, none so welcome to him as godly Christians: those very persons that before he did malign, and hate to the death, afterwards he ventured his life for their sakes. And indeed

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there is nothing that doth make a greater discovery of a mans spirit, than the company which he doth frequent and delight in. A prophane spirited man, loveth prophane company, one that is not prophane and yet unconverted, only civil and outwardly blameless in his conversation, delights not in prophane company, nor yet in godly society, only in such as are in the same state and form with himself: But gracious Souls delight in such as truly fear God; yea, the more there is of God in any one, the more doth the true convert delight in communion with him, *Psal. 119.63. I am (though a King) a companion of all them (be they never so mean in this World) that fear thee, and of them that keep thy Precepts.* By these things then see, that in conversion there is an universal change wrought upon the sinner. Thus much may suffice to be spoken by way of Explication. The nature of true conversion hath been opened unto you in the Propositions cleared, which are expressive of the causes, parts, degrees, subject of true conversion.

We come now to demonstrate the point,

fc. That a sound through conversion is of absolute necessity to the Souls entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. And this is proved,
1. From plain testimony of Scripture The words of this Text (if there were no more) are a plain proof of this Doctrine, they stand like a Flaming-Sword, to keep all unconverted sinners from any hopes of entering into lost Paradise: see also *John 3. 3. Jesus said Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Mark how every word is solemn and weighty, [*I*] *say unto thee*, [*I*] *that am truth it felt*; [*I*] *that never spake, nor can speak an untrue or an idle unprofitable word* [*I*] *say unto thee*, and this with a *verily*; and that doubled, *verily, verily except a man*, that is to say *any man whatsoever he be high or low, be he learned or unlearned. if he be a man, except he be born again, its not only true that he shall not, but that he cannot see the Kingdom of God: therefore also the Apostle hath said, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 15. 50.* Meer nature, or un sanctified nature, can never go to heaven. And indeed all the

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threatnings in the Word of God, are evidences of this truth: the Law threatneth sinners with most certain death, *Gen. 2. 17.* And the Gospel denounceth no less than Eternal Damnation, against every Unbeliever, *Mark. 16. 15, 16.* Therefore without conversion, there can be no salvation.

Argum. 2. Because a natural unconverted man, hath no interest in Jesus Christ; there is no Salvation to be expected, but by Christ, *Act. 4. 12. neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven, whereby we must be saved.* If ever a Man would get to Heaven, he must be sure to go in at the right door; now Christ is that door, *John 10. 9.*

Christ himself there saith, *I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.* And again, *I am the way, the truth, and the life, Joh. 14. 6.* Men may imagine there are divers wayes which lead to heaven; but it will be found true, that there is, and alwayes was, but one way to heaven, and that is the way of Faith unfeigned in Jesus Christ the Son of God. Now as for a natural unconverted man, he hath no real interest in Christ; he is a

miserable stranger to the life of Union and communion with the Son of God : therefore the Apostle, declaring what the *Ephesians* were by nature, faith, they were without Christ, *Ephes. 2. 12.* and the same Apostle faith to the *Corinthians*, *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*, 2 *Cor. 5. 17.* They therefore that are not become *new creatures*, but do remain still in their old, natural, sinful estate, are not in Christ, and therefore living and dying in their present states, they shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

Argum. 3. *Because one sin, if loved and liv'd in, will certainly exclude the soul out of Heaven.* This Text doth plainly intimate that that one sin of unmortified Pride, is enough to keep out of heaven. The like may be said concerning any other sin; one wound may kill a man, as well as a hundred; one leak will as certainly sink a Vessel to the bottom of the Sea as many : so one Lust, if loved and lived in, will kill and sink a mans Soul for ever: therefore the Scripture faith, *Repent and turn from [All] your Transgressions, so iniquity shall*

not be your ruin, Ezek. 18.30. Though a sinner should turn from many Iniquities, if there be but one sin left behind unturned from, that one will prove the utter and eternal ruin of his Soul. This is the undoing misery of many, that go far, and bid fair for Heaven, that they leave one unmortified lust behind, which becometh their ruin at last. *Jehu* went far, but there was a lust of ambition left in him that was never subdued. *Judas* went far but there was a lust of covetousness never mortified in his heart. *Herod* went far, and did many things, but there was a lust of uncleanness that he was never delivered from; and by this means did these men all lose their precious Souls. Know therefore for certain, that if there be but one lust loved and lived in, that will exclude out of Heaven. Though a mans sin should be as dear to him as his right hand, or his right eye; if he do not forsake it, he must be cast into *Hell-fire*, where the worm dieth not, and where the fire never shall be quenched, Mark 9 47.48.

Having opened and proved the Point,

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we proceed, in the Lords fear, to make some Application of it.

Now by way of Use, I. *We may hence infer, That they that are truly and thoroughly converted to God in Christ, are in a very happy condition.* There are two things here that do shew the happiness of such Souls: 1. In that a *Kingdom is theirs*, they do enter upon a Kingdom; therefore sincere Converts are called the children of *the Kingdom*, Mat. 13.38. they are such children as have a Kingdom for their inheritance. Amongst men, a *Kingdom* is the highest dignity; so to shew the glorious happiness wherewith such shall be dignified, they are stiled *Heirs of a Kingdom*. 2. Another thing which sets forth their happiness, is *the quality of the Kingdom* which they shall possess, *its an heavenly Kingdom*: The Text calls it, *the Kingdom of Heaven*. All earthly Kingdoms are as nothing, compared with this. This Kingdom of Heaven noteth three things; all which do set forth the wonderful happiness of truly converted ones. 1. *It noteth a state of saving sanctifying Grace*: oft-times

in Scripture, the being brought out of a state of Nature into a state of Grace is called *entring into the Kingdom*, Col. 1. 13. *Mat. 21. 13.* For then men are delivered out of Satans, and are become Subjects of the Lords Kingdom. Now they that are brought into a state of grace are happy indeed: for grace is Heaven begun; he that hath Grace, shall as certainly go to heaven, as if he were there already; which may be one reason why this expression, of the Kingdom of heaven, is put to signifie a state of Grace. 2. *It may note the glory and dominion which the Saints shall possess at the last and great day*, Luk. 22. 29, 30. *I appoint unto you a Kingdom——You shall sit upon Thrones judging, &c.* which evidently intimates, that at the Judgment-day the Saints shall have a Kingdom. And no doubt this is a special thing aimed at in the Text, as will appear to him that well considers the occasion of these words: and though the Judgment shall be in this lower visible world; yet this is fitly called *the Kingdom of heaven*, because it will be a most heavenly dispensation; also in respect of

of the original of it, the God of heaven will set it up. *New Jerusalem cometh down from God out of heaven, Rev. 21.2.* In a word, at the last day, converted ones shall be so many heavenly Kings; therefore happy are they. 3. *This expression may note, that eternal bliss which the Saints shall enjoy with Christ in the highest heaven.* Many times in the Scripture, Heaven, and the Kingdom of Heaven, noteth that life of glory which the saints shal partake of with Christ in Heaven to all Eternity. And this also is intimated here in the Text, to be the portion of converted ones. And besides these things which the Text expresseth, there are other things that manifest the happy estate of such persons. For 3^{dly} *They are the Children of God.* Christ proveth, that Peace-makers are blessed, because they are the children of God; *Mat. 5.8.* Now then are converted ones blessed, for they are the Children of God; therefore are they said to bear his Image, *Col. 3.10.* even as a child bears the image of his Father. Hence, after the Prodigal was

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was converted, the Lord saith of him, *This my Son was dead, but he is alive again*, Luk. 15. 24. So then God then owneth him for his Son. All the men and women in the World are divided into these two ranks, either they are *the children of God*, or else they are *the Children of the Devil*, 1 Joh. 3. 10. Natural men are still the Devils children, Scripture calls them so: But as for converted persons, they are Gods Children, and therefore happy. 4. *All their sins are pardoned: Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered: Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity*; Psal. 32. 1, 2. Now this is true concerning all that are indeed converted, Rom. 8. 30. *Whom he called, them he justified*. Where there is effectual calling, or conversion, there is Justification, which implieth the *Rimission of sins*; yea, though a man may have been guilty of never so many and great sins, yet if he truly repent of them, and turn from them unto God in Christ, they shall all be pardoned, *Isai. 55. 7*. We see it in *Paul*, he was *the chief of sinners*, yet he
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found mercy, that is, pardoning mercy (for by Mercy, forgiveness is many times meant in the Scripture) upon his conversion to Christ, 1 *Tim* 1.14,15. And *Mary Magdalene* (if she were the person spoken of, *Luk* 7.47. was a great sinner, yet when she truly repented, and turned to the Lord, *her sins, which were many, were forgiven*: Yea more let me say, though a man had been the greatest sinner in the world, if he *truly and thoroughly* convert from the evil of his wayes, and turn to God in Jesus Christ, the Lord will take him into his favour, and be as fully reconciled to him, as if he had never committed any such sins: this we see also in *Paul* and *Peter*, though both of them had transgressed heinously (as before was said) yet when they converted, God took them into his favour; and to shew that he was fully reconciled towards them, he employed them in his service, and made them instrumental in the conversion of many a Soul.

Use II. *We may likewise see by this, the woful misery of all those that remain in an*

unconverted estate. But every one will be ready to say, Unconverted persons are miserable indeed, as being such as shall be excluded out of Heaven. But *are we not all converted? are we not all Christians?* Alas Friends, deceive not your own Souls, I do beseech you: But therefore know,
1. *They that remain ignorant in spiritual things are unconverted,* 1 Cor. 2. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned:* So that they that are unacquainted with the *things of the spirit*, are in their natural estate still. What shall we think of those then, that mock and deride at the workings of Gods Spirit upon the Soul in its first, or in after Conversion? And what shall we say of those that remain ignorant in Fundamental Points in Religion? Some, though they live under Gospel-Light, yet are so, if they be examined about the great matters of Religion, especially about Christ, they bewray lamentable ignorance. Certainly if ye are not turned *from darkness to light*, ye are not converted, *Act. 26. 18.* And if
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the Soul be without knowledge, it is not good, *Prov.* 19.2. Its not possible for the Soul to be entred into the Kingdom of Heaven, and yet to live in darkness and ignorance still. 2. *They that are prophane either in heart or life, are unconverted.* *E-sau* was a Type of all natural irregenerate men ; and he is called a *prophane person*, *Heb.* 12.16. Alas, how many such are there whose hearts flight and despise spiritual blessings, even as *prophane Esau* did? Oh the secret prophaneness & Atheism of the hearts of men and women! Whence is it that many live in a careless neglect of God, and of the things of God, and of their own Salvation by Christ, but from the Prophaneness and Atheism of their hearts? *Psal.* 14.1,2. So as for all those that live in any scandalous sins against the first or second Table of the Law, it is certain that they are not converted. Hence the Apostle speaketh as you find, *1 Pet.* 33,4. *the time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, & abominable Idolaters wherein*

wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot. So that when they were converted, they quite left off their prophane courses that once they had lived in. All you therefore that are Drunkards, or Lascivious persons, or that follow any other prophane courses, except you be converted, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. 3. They that have nothing beyond civility and morality, are in an unconverted estate. There is a generation risen up of late, who give out, as if *saving Grace and Morality* were the same. But wo to that mans soul that shall either say or think so: certainly, there is a difference between a *meer moral man*, and a *true Christian*. Many Heathens have excelled as to *moral Endowments*. Nay, the Apostate Infidel *Julian* the Emperour, yet as to *moral Accomplishments*, was a rarely qualified person; But shall we say, that that Enemy of Christ had Grace in his Soul? Its true, that *Morality* is good and lovely; yea, and such persons are nearer to conversion than prophane ones are, *Mar. 12. 34.* yet this may be

be without Grace. The young man in the Gospel was a very *civil moral man*, but he lacked saving Grace for all that, *Luk. 18. 21, 22.* The Pharisee was *no Extortioner, nor Unjust, nor an Adulterer, nor like the Publican*; and yet for all that, in his natural, unconverted estate, *Luk. 18. 11.* Paul before his *conversion*, was *touching the righteousness of the Law blameless*, *Phil. 3. 6.* They therefore that bless themselves in their condition, only because none can say to them, that black is their eye, or charge them with any scandalous miscarriages in their lives, are in an unconverted estate. 4. *So likewise are they all whose Religion is nothing else but Education.* Alas, there are many that are deceived with this; all their Religion is the meer impression of a godly Education, without any special work of the holy Spirit upon their Souls. Not but that a Religious Education is a great mercy, yea, and to many of the Elect it is the great means of their conversion. But when Education alone is rested in, without experience of a regenerating work of the Spirit, then a man's case is sad. There are

are, that because they were born of christian Parents, and baptized, and when grown up, profess the Christian Religion which they have been educated in, therefore they think that they need no other conversion. Like that *Prelate*, who when one was convented before him for going to hear out of his Parish Church; the man alledging, that the reason why he did it, was, because the Minister whom he went to hear, was the instrument of his conversion, and therefore he could not but love to hear him Preach. *How* (said the Prelate) *Converted by him! Wert thou a Jew, or wast thou a Turk, that thou shouldst talk of Conversion? Art thou born an Englishman, and a Christian, and dost thou speak of Conversion?* Thus, I say, many Christians are like *Nicodemus*, who thought that the Doctrine of Conversion amongst the Jews that were by Education and Profession the People of God, was a strange Doctrine, *Joh. 3. 5, 6, 7.* There are many Christians that have no Religion or Conversion, but such, as if they had been brought up amongst *Jews*, they would have been *Jews*; if

if amongst *Mahomotans*, or *Papists*, they would have been so too; only through the efficacy of Education, in conjunction with natural Devotion, they make some shew of Christianity, without ever experiencing the saving operations of the holy Spirit in their hearts, whereas he that is converted indeed is *born of the spirit*, John 3. 6.

Lastly, *They all, whose Religion is, in being of this or that perswasion*, are in an unconverted estate. True it is, that Men must be of a right perswasion and belief in the Fundamental Points of the Christian Faith, or they cannot enter into the Kingdom of heaven. But though *Orthodoxy* in respect of *Judgment*, be necessary, yet it is not sufficient unto Salvation: Nevertheless, there are some Christians, that if we take from them *this or that particular Opinion* in some lesser points, all their Religion is gone. This is sad; what saith the Scripture? *Gal. 6. 15. In Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new creature*: So that a man may be of that *Party or Perswasion*

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which are for Circumcision, or of that Party or Perswasion that are against Circumcision, and yet not be a new creature. If therefore all a mans Religion lieth in this, that he is for or against Circumcision, the case is sad with him: for he is no new creature, no true Convert. Some there are, that their Souls are undone with the *Monopoly of an Opinion*, their Religion is all in parties. And Oh that there were not need to speak of this amongst us also! Some, if they be of the *Anabaptist* Perswasion, here's all their Religion; others, if they be *Independents* (as the World speaks) here's all their Religion; others, if they be against this or that Superstition, here's all their Religion. Alas, alas! Conversion doth not consist in these matters only; if therefore these things be the main of ones Religion, that's a sure sign, that his conversion was slight and overly, and that he hath not attained to that sound *and through conversion*, which the Text and Doctrine speaketh of.

Now then we come a little to spread before you the woful misery of all such

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is of absolute necessity, &c.

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unconverted Souls. Know then, 1. *That as long as thou art unconverted, all the sins that ever thou didst commit in thy life, remain un-pardoned.* Hence is that, Mark 4. 12. *Lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins forgiven them.* So that sins are not forgiven, except there be conversion: therefore thy Soul is in a miserable case; for any one of thy sins, though it were the least sin that ever thou didst commit in thy life, yet if it remain unpardoned, the guilt of it is enough to sink thy soul down into the bottomless Pit: What then is like to become of thee, since all thy sins, thy numberless sins, thy great sins, ly in bank against thy Soul; not so much as one of them forgiven? 2. *An unconverted sinner hath no Friend*: he hath no Friend in Heaven; God, in whose favour is life, is an Enemy to such a sinner; *Natural Men* are called the *Enemies of God*, Rom. 5. 10. Col. 1. 21. Oh, to be out of Gods favour, that's misery indeed. Hence *Cain* cried and roared at the doleful apprehension of his wretchedness, when he saw himself cast out of Gods favour: Oh

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faith he, *my punishment is greater than I can bear, for I must be hid from the face of God.* This is thy very doom, that art in thy natural, unconverted estate. And in as much as God is thy Enemy, all creatures in Heaven and on Earth are so too, *Hof. 2. 18.* yea, there is a secret curse upon all thy enjoyments. For, 3. *Thou dost nothing else but sin against God*: An unconverted sinner never thought one good thought, nor spake one good word, nor did one good action before God in all his life: his civil actions are sins, *Prov. 21. 24* *The ploughing of the wicked is sin*: So his natural Actions, his eating and drinking, &c. is sin: nay, his Religious actions are sins, his praying, and hearing, and fasting, and reading, all are so many sinful abominations in the Lords sight, *Prov. 15. 9* & *28. 9.* *Psal. 109. 7.* A natural man may do and speak, and think many things, which for the matter of them are good; but as done by such a person as is out of Christ they are not good, but evil in the sight of God. Certainly, this would be an *awakening consideration*, if sinners would think *sadly*

sadly of it : canst thou make light of this that look how many actions there have been done by thee in all thy life time, how many words thou hast spoken, how many thoughts have been in thy heart, so many sins art thou guilty of, and must one day answer for them all ! Lastly, *Thou art in a state of death and condemnation.* A natural man *is dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. 2.1. A poor sinner hath all the miserable properties of a dead man belonging to him. As now a dead man cannot stir or go, so it is with a sinner, he cannot walk in the ways of God ; one that's dead cannot hear, so a sinner is deaf to all the calls of Heaven. The Lord giveth many a loud knock and call, yet the sinner heareth nothing ; the reason is, because he is dead. Again, a dead man cannot speak ; so it is with a sinner, he hath no ability for spiritual discourse : This is the reason why some of you live in the neglect of Prayer. The Word hath told you many time, that you must pray in your Families, and in your Closets too, and you go with convinced Consciences that this is your duty,

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and yet you do it not; why? you say you cannot: I would pray in my Family, but I cannot. Alas poor creature, I believe thee; for thou art dead in sins, and how should a dead creature speak unto God in Prayer? Yea, and an unconverted sinner is not only under spiritual Death for the present, but he remains under a sad Sentence of eternal Death, *Joh. 3. 18.* *He that believeth not is condemned already:* Its not only true, that he shall be condemned hereafter, but he is so already. The Sentence of death is *already* pronounced against him, and shall as certainly be executed upon him, *if he turn not*, as if it were *already* done. Oh consider and tremble at it, all you that live in sin. I must tell you, for I should not be able to hold up my head before the Son of God another day, if I should forbear to *tell you* the truth; and therefore I *tell you plainly and truly*; If any person amongst you, man or woman, be they high or low, rich or poor, shall not turn from sin, yea, and from all sin, Eternal death shall as certainly be your portion, as if you were already in Hell.

Use

Use III. Let such a solemn Truth as this, put us upon serious and impartial *Examination* about this point, whether we be indeed converted or no. Sure it is no wisdom for us to let a matter of such moment ly at uncertainties ; yet such madness is in the hearts of many of the Sons of men, that they go on carelessly, although if they should die in their present condition, they know not whither their Souls must for Heaven, or for Hell, as not minding whether they be in a converted, or an unconverted estate. But Oh, put this matter to the trial, and come to some certainty about your spiritual and eternal states.

You'll say, *But how shall we know whether we be converted or no ?*

Ans. 1. Try by that Character which the Text doth afford ; viz. That converted persons *become as little Children*. Look, as little Children are come into a World, where they never were afore ; so tis in Conversion, the Soul *begins the World anew*, as it were, and the sinner leads a new life which before he was not acquainted

with. Hence is that Expression, *Rom. 6.4 Walk in newness of life.* Particularly, there are divers properties in little Children, which set forth a converted person: *e.g.*

1. *Humbleness of mind*: A Child hath no ambitious high designs in his heart, only minds lesser matters. Hence *David* saith, *Psal. 131.1,2. Lord my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me: Surely I have behaved myself as a child that is wearied, my soul is as a weaned Child.* *David* was accused, as if he had had ambitious aspirings after *Saul's* Kingdom; But, saith he, I am as free from those Imputations as a Child that is but a weanling, who hath no such aspirings in his thoughts. Now this humbleness of mind, is a special thing intended in the Text by conversion. Unmortified Pride is a soul-damning sin: yet there is no sin more natural, or more hard to subdue than Pride; its the first that liveth, and the last that dieth. Hence the work of conversion is well expressed in the Text, by the mortification of that one lust.

And

And oft in the Scripture, a *natural man* & a *proud man* are the same, *Mal. 4. 1.* and a converted man, and an humble man are also the same, *Jam. 4. 6. Luk. 18. 14.* *He that humbles himself shall be exalted.* That humbling noteth Conversion.

2. *A Child is teachable and tractable:* A Child is far more easily brought under Discipline, than an elder person that was never used to it. Thus it is with a *Convert*: He is become marvellous teachable, ready to be led with the Word and Spirit of God: It is said of such, *Isai. 11. 6. A little child shall lead them.* Now then consider, will the least Word of God awe you, and lead you this way or that way? Though the Instrument be never so contemptible, yet if he bring Scripture along with him, doth the Authority of that carry you before it, this is a good Sign.

3. *Children are apt to forget wrongs:* Hence is that, *1 Cor. 14. 20. in malice be ye Children.* You often observe that Children, though they fall out never so, yet in a little time all will be forgotten, and they will become as good friends as ever they were.

were. Truly, he that cannot forgive wrongs, hath no Grace in his heart ; so if a man hath a *forgiving spirit*, its a good sign ; yea, if a man doth freely forgive those that wrong him, and if he doth it out of conscience to the holy Commandment of God, and out of a sense of the Grace of God towards him, in pardoning of his many sins, it is one of the clearest Evidences of a true Child of God that can be given. This hath Christ taught us, *Mat. 6. 14, 15. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : But if you forgive them not their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.* So that you see it holds true both in the Affirmative, and in the Negative, That a *forgiving spirit* is an evidence of a true child of God ; and the want of this, an evidence of the contrary. But besides these Characters which the Text doth afford, some other things may be mentioned as marks of *Trial* here. Therefore.

2. *Try this matter by the greatness of this change which is wrought in Conversion.* You
heard

heard in opening the point, how conversion doth imply an universal change: Is it so with you? have you new heads, new hearts, new words, new thoughts, new lives and all? Moreover, the change wrought in *conversion* is universal, in respect of entire obedience unto all Divine commands, and an utter forsaking of every false way. Therefore it is said, *the fruit of the spirit is in [All] goodness, &c. Eph. 5.9.* Where the spirit hath wrought grace there is *all* goodness: Such a Soul doth practise *all* duties, and forsake *all* sins. It is indeed the greatest change that men are subject to. It is a marvelous change which death brings along with it; hence *Job* calls *his death his change*: It is so by way of eminency; *Job 14. 14.* But *Conversion* brings a greater change with it: For at death the change is only in respect of place and degree, &c. But in *Conversion* there's a change wrought in respect of state and kind, *Eph. 5.8. Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are light in the Lord.* There are new and quite contrary qualities wrought in the Soul, so as the sinner Converted differs

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differs as much from the sinner Unconverted, as light differs from darkness. For,

3. *If a man be converted, then his nature is changed*; therefore such are said to *partake of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. Such an one doth not only new acts, but there is in him a new nature, from whence these acts do proceed. He hath not only new *practises*, but a new *Principle*. Hence it is in some sort *unnatural* for a converted man to Sin, that is, so far forth as he is *Regenerate*, 1 Joh. 3. 9. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God*. And it is natural unto him to do good and to endeavour to please God. Hence *Paul* saith to the *Philippians* concerning *Timothy*, that he *did naturally care for their estate*, Chap. 2. v. 20. This was, because *Timothy* was a converted gracious man, and so a new nature was conferred upon him. Had it not been for converting Grace, such a care as that was, had never been natural to him.

4. You may try whether you are converted, by that spiritual Combat which is peculiar to the

the Regenerate. It is with a Child of God, as it was with *Rebecca*, in whom there was a *Jacob* and an *Esau*; or as it was with the house of *Abraham*, where there was an *Isaac* and an *Ishmael*: So it is with the heart of a Christian, there is a regenerate and un-regenerate part conflicting and combating, the one against the other, *Gal. 5.17.* Now if there be Spirit lusting against the Flesh, that is a sure sign that there is Spirit; only there is a *dangerous delusion* here, which many deceive themselves with; they take the Reluctancy of a natural enlightened Conscience against Sin, to be the spiritual Combat, which is peculiar to the Regenerate, but these differ much. As to the ground of the opposition, there is a difference, the one opposeth Sin, because of the *vileness and filthiness of its nature*; the other only, or chiefly for fear of punishment. It may be illustrated by this familiar Comparison: Some men are loth to meddle with coals of fire, because of filth which is about them; others never stick at it, only because of fire, lest haply their fingers should be burnt

burnt, they are loth to meddle: So it is here, a Natural man would never fall out with sin, because of the filth of it, only there's fire in sin, which would burn his Conscience, if he should meddle with it, and therefore he forbears some *acts* of sin; but the sincere Convert *is acted* from another Principle. There is also a difference as to the evils opposed; for when the conflict is only from an enlightned Conscience, the evils opposed are wont to be more *gross* and *vile*; but in the spiritual combat, seemingly little *Sins* are mourned under, even vain thoughts are a wearisome burthen. In the one, only some sins are opposed; in the other, all sin. So likewise there is wont to be a difference, in respect of the continuance of the opposition: that which proceeds only from an enlightned conscience is wont to be but now and then, perhaps when some gross sin hath been committed, or the like; but the spiritual Combat is constant, and without intermission.

Use IV. Let it be a word of Exhortation; *Oh convert your selves to God in Christ.*
Con-

Consider therefore the happy condition of all converted ones ; of this you heard in the first *Use*. Consider the misery of the unconverted : of this you heard in the second *Use*. Consider also the absolute necessity of this conversion ; you [Must] *be born again*, Joh.3.7. There's a *must* for it ; you *must* be so, or else be shut out of Heaven to all Eternity : of this you heard in the demonstration of the point which hath been *insisted* on.

A word or two more let me say, 1. *Remember that you are in continual danger of ruin, as long as you remain unconverted.* It is a dangerous thing for any man to defer *his Conversion* one day, or but one hour. I have sometimes put you in mind of an Expression of Mr. Bolton's, who said, *He would not be in the condition of an unconverted man one hour, though he might have all the World for it, lest haply death should come upon him in that hour, and so Repentance be too late.* Oh methinks, I would not be in my Natural, unconverted estate again one moment, though I might have ten thousand Worlds for it, lest Death should

should seize upon me in a moment, and so my immortal Soul be lost. Think sadly of it, you that know not what the new Birth meaneth: if Death should find thee in thy present condition, it had been better for thee never to have been born; better for you never to have been born, than not to be *new born*; yea, it had been better for thee to have been a Dog, or a Toad, or a Serpent, or the vilest Creature in the World, than to dy in a natural, unconverted estate: for these doleful Creatures when they die, see an end of their misery; but when thou diest, thy misery begins; when once thy immortal Soul is out of thy Body, thy *endless and easeless woes* will come upon thee, without any hope of remedy.

2. One word more I must needs say unto you; and therefore be it known unto you, that if any of you will venture on still in your trespasses, *so as to dy in your sins, your blood shall be upon your own heads.* I Remember what the Lord said to his Prophet, *Ezek. 3. 17, 18, 19. Son of man, I have made thee a Watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth,*
and

is of absolute necessity, &c.

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and give them warning from me : When I say unto the wicked thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand : yet if thou warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul. Now then let me deliver my Soul this day ; Behold I do here in the Name of the Lord solemnly and earnestly warn every sinner amongst you, that you make haste to turn unto God in Jesus Christ ; and I declare to you, that if you do it not, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. God before whom I stand, and holy Angels that are here present, and all this Assembly, shall bear me witness at the last day, that warning was given to you: Now if you will not take the warning, at your peril be it. And I have rejoycing in my own soul, that this is not the first time that I have given you warning, but many a time, yea, without ceasing, for the space

E

of

66 *A sound and through Conversion,*
of these ten years, that the Lord hath upheld me amongst you, you have been told of these things. Now I call Heaven and Earth to record this day, that I have set before you Life and Death ; therefore *chuse Life, else your blood will be upon your own heads.*

Object. But some will say, *We cannot convert our selves :*

Ans. Yet observe these two Rules:

1. *Put away all vain thoughts of being in a good estate already.* Many might have been converted, if they had not taken up with a false and groundless persuasion of their being in a good and converted estate already: This was the ruin of the Jews and Pharisees especially, *Joh. 9.2, ult.* Remember that conviction of misery, is the first step towards Conversion. We see it in the Prodigal, *Luk. 15. 17.* he cried out, *I perish ;* Thou must see that thou hast *a perishing, dying, damning Soul,* and then there's hopes of a right Conversion.

2. *Go to God for converting Grace,* say as *Ephraim did, Jer. 31. 18. Turn thou me and I shall*

is of absolute necessity, &c.

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shall be turned: And go and pray, as for thy life and soul, which lies at stake until the Lord convert thee. Suppose thou wert condemned to die a natural death; if the Judge should tell thee, if thou would pray and beg hard for thy life, thou shouldst have it: Oh how wouldst thou pierce the Heavens with thy cries: So it is here, thou art condemned to die an everlasting death; nevertheless, the Lord saith, if thou wilt pray and seek to him for life, the Sentence may yet be reversed. Therefore do thus before thy Decree bring forth, *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.*

Seasons of Grace (especially the present season) are carefully to be improved and redeemed.

Col. 4.5. *Redeeming the time.*

THe usual method observed by the Apostle *Paul* in his Epistles, is, first

to discourse Doctrinally, and then Practically; and so he doth in this Epistle to the *Colossians*. The two first Chapters are Doctrinal, and the two last are Practical.

This Chapter then doth contain matter of Exhortation unto duty: 1. We have a special *Oeconomical* Precept, even a rule concerning Household-Government, (which in the former Chapter the Apostle had been speaking of, *ver. 1.* 2. He lays down fundry general *Moral Precepts* which concern Christians, in whatever state or relation they may stand in.

And here the Apostle doth Exhort: 1. To the practice of that great duty of prayer, *ver. 2.* and in special that they would pray for him, *ver. 3, 4.* 2. He exhorts unto Christian Wisdom. And this is the scope of this verse, in which we have three things 1. The duty exhorted unto, namely, wise walking, *Walk in Wisdom*, that is, cautiously and circumspectly, as it is expressed by the same Apostle, writing to the *Ephe- sians*, ch. 5. v. 16. 2. We have the object of this duty, *towards them that are without*, that is Infidels, who are out of the Pale

Pale of the visible Church. The Church is compared to an House, hence they that are of the Church, are said to be *within*, that is, within doors, in respect of that sacred House of the Church; and they that do not belong to the visible Church, are described to be *without*, that is, they are not admitted within doors, but are kept out of the Temple.

3. Here is that which is the special work and evidence of this wisdom, namely, *to redeem the time*, which are the words, that by Gods help, we are to speak of.

Time is sometimes taken, for space of time. Sometimes it is taken for *opportunity of time*; it is the same with *Season*. It may be taken both wayes here, and especially in the latter sense; for the Greek word is not χρόνος, the usual word for time, but καιρος, which signifieth Season or Opportunity. The *Doctrine* which the words do afford unto, is this,

That it is a great part of Christian Wisdom, timely to improve Opportunities and Seasons of Grace.

Intending to dispatch the point at this time, we shall in the Doctrinal prosecution of it, only speak to two things.

1. What those seasons are which ought to be improved. 2. What is implied in redeeming seasons of Grace; or when a man may be said to redeem the time.

Q. What are those seasons which ought to be improved?

Answ. 1. A mans life time in this world is to be improved: Thus Christ hath taught us by his own unerring Example, Joh.9.4. I must work while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work. A mans life is but a season, even a day which shall have a night to follow it; and therefore it is to be improved: Yea, and it is but a short season, 1 Cor.7.30. The time is short. He that hath longest to live, yet hath but a short time to be in this world; therefore James saith, What is your life? it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away, Chap.4. ver. 14. and David saith, Behold thou hast made my dayes an hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee, Psal.39.5. A mans time in this
World

World is as nothing before God, that is to say, as nothing in comparifon of Eternity ; therefore this time ought fo much the more carefully and diligently to be improved ; and it may be, a mans time is much fhorter than himfelf doth think for. We read of one in the Gofpel that was fo foolifh, as to dream of many years, whenas he had not fo much as one day to live : He faid he had goods for many, not only dayes, but years, whenas before the next day, his Soul was taken from him, *Luk. 12. 20.* Befides, when a mans life is once gone, it is irrecoverable, men muft die, and out of this World they fhall go, and yet they *die but once*, *Heb. 9. 27.* *It is appointed for men [Once] to die ;* When once men are dead, *the places that have known them, fhall know them no more ; the eyes that have feen them, fhall fee them no more ; and the ears that have heard them, fhall hear them no more.* And thence if men do not improve their time whileft they are alive in the World, they lofe their feafon for ever. When death is come, it is then too late to improve time ; therefore *Hezekiah*

faith, *they that go down into the pit, cannot hope for thy truth*, Isai. 38. 18. When a mans body is gone down into the pit of the Grave, and his Soul is gone into the pit of Hell, he is past hope, and past help; he cannot hope for Gods mercy, and cannot hope for pardon of sin, he cannot hope for the salvation of his Soul: Therefore life-time is to be improved:

2. *Times set a part for the solemn Worship of God, are carefully to be improved* Christians ought to redeem time from their particular, to attend the duties of their general calling; they ought not to serve themselves only, but they must look to it, that they allow themselves time also for the service of God. It is true, that some are so much in the outward performance of Religious duties, as that they do thereby intrench upon their particular callings, spending more time in outward Worship, than any rule of God doth require, or allow them to do: So the *Heretical Euchites* of old, &c. But the greatest part of men err on the other hand, in allowing too little time, rather than too much, for the performance of sacred duties. But it is a

great point of Christian wisdom, to order things aright about this matter; so as that neither a mans particular calling may intrench upon his general calling as a Christian, nor yet his general upon the particular.. I say, that time must be allowed for the worship of God. A man may not neglect the Worship of God, either in his Family, or in his Closet, or in the publick Assemblies of his people, out of pretence that he wants time; rather let a man deny himself time to sleep, nay time to eat and drink, than not to take time to Pray, and to serve God. Moreover, when a man is worshipping God in any duty, such a season is very heedfully to be improved, else the Lords Name will be taken in vain; and men instead of serving and pleasing God, will provoke him to displeasure by an heedless serving of him. And in special the Lords day is a season of Grace which ought to be improved, that's the day appointed to solemnize the Name and Worship of God in Christ amongst men, to the end of the World, *Psal. 118.*

24. This is the day which the Lord hath made

we will rejoyce in it: the day of Christs Resurrection, which was upon the first day of the week, even this very day is to be observed in commemoration of the resurrection and Redemption of Christ: *This is the Day*, which above others, ought to be prized and improved: It is a Market-day for the Soul, and therefore to be redeemed. Besides, if men take hold of opportunities, to attend there where God is worshipped, they come where the Lord himself cometh, and thence may hope for a blessing: In which respect such seasons should earnestly be laid hold on, You read in the fifth of *John*, concerning an impotent man that lay waiting at the Pools of *Bethesda*, and Christ finding him there, he was healed: Had not the man layen at the Pools of *Bethesda*, Christ had not found him there; and had not Christ found him there, he had not been healed. Now the Ordinances of God are the pools of *Bethesda*, if Christ find men there, who knoweth but that Grace and life may be given into their Souls; but if they be not there, they keep themselves out of the way of a blessing.

to be improved and redeemed.

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3. *The time of prosperity* is a season which ought to be well improved : Thus you find *David* calling upon the Princes of *Israel*, 1 Chron. 22. 11, 18, 19. *Is not the Lord your God with you? hath he not given you rest on every side? now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.* It is (saith he) a prosperous season with you, and therefore now be looking after God, and the things of God; and indeed this is the most commodious season. Husbandmen you know will take the season whilest the Sun shineth, and the weather is favourable, to be gathering in the fruits of the Earth: So if men would be laying in for Eternity, if they would be laying up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of Eternal Life, it will be their Wisdom to improve the time of prosperity in order thereunto. As now, if God give unto a man a time of health and strength, let him improve it, in order to making his peace with God, and promoting the eternal welfare of his own Soul. Thus the Holy Ghost by *Solomon* doth exhort

hort, *Eccles. 12. 1. Remember thy Creator ;*
Ay, but when ? When old age cometh ;
or when sickness and death cometh, but
never before that ; so the carnal heart
saith, and so the Devil saith, but the Lord
teacheth otherwise ; therefore it is added,
In the days of thy youth, while the evil dayes
come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou
shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. The
evil dayes of sickness, or the troublesome
years of old age will come upon you ; but
see that you remember to make your peace
with God before those dayes come. So
again, if the Lord bestow upon a man an
estate, and cause him to prosper in the
World in that respect, let him improve
this, to honour God with his substance,
and wisely make unto himself friends in
Heaven, with the unrighteous Mammon
of this World. And truly if men do
neglect such seasons, they have no reason
to expect other, but that God will deprive
them of them, and alter the tenour of his
gracious dispensations towards them. As
it was said to *Hesther, Who knoweth whe-*
ther thou art come to the Kingdom for such a
time

to be improved and redeemed.

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time as this? if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, thou and thy Father's house shall be destroyed, Esth. 4. 14. So I say, who knoweth but that the Lord hath given men health and wealth, and prospered them here and there in the World, that so they might improve these mercies and good things, to the honour of him that gave them, and for their own spiritual and eternal comfort: It therefore they altogether neglect this season, let them look that God will blast their estates, and smite them with sickness, yea, and that a worse thing shall befall them. Nevertheless,

4. *The time of Adversity* is a season which ought likewise to be improved: Hence, this Apostle saith, *Redeem the time, because the dayes are evil, Eph. 5. 16.* The times were then as they are now. It was in the Apostles dayes a time of Persecution and suffering to the People of God, therefore he calls that time an evil day: Now in this season, time was to be redeemed; the worse the times are, the better Christians ought to be; if the times be very bad, Christians ought to be very good:

Hence

Hence also is that *2 Tim. 4. 2. Preach the Word, be instant in season, and out of season.*

In season, is in time of prosperity; *out of season* is a time of Adversity, when a man cannot Preach, nor hear a Sermon, without incurring danger; yet such times must be improved to be doing and receiving good. If the times be bad, then the Lord threatens men, to deprive them of seasons of Grace, and in that respect there is the more need to improve them. And this is a special thing intended by the Apostle in the Text, *Walk in wisdom redeeming the time*: Shew your wisdom (saith he) by making the best of a bad Market. As wise Merchants, if the times be bad, will be more wary; if Trading be dead and low, they will be loth to venture upon a bad bargain, or to let slip the advantage of a good Bargain. Thus should men deal as to their Souls; as for seasons of Grace, they should see that they husband them well, especially when the Lord is threatning to take them away.

5. Times of being in company and converse with others, ought to be improved. Such

times

times should be improved for the receiving of spiritual good : It is said, *He that walks with the wise, shall be wise*, Prov. 13. 20. If a man doth fall into the company of such as are godly and wise, he hath now an opportunity put into his hands to get wisdom ; he might propound many profitable Questions, which he is not able to resolve himself, but one that God hath given a greater measure of wisdom and understanding unto, could soon resolve him, had he an heart to improve such an opportunity. Again, such times should be improved for doing good, that is, by holy conference and exhortations unto the thing that good is ; as we see in the Context, *Redeem the time*, saith the Apostle ; and then the very next words are, *let your speech be alwayes with Grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man*, Col. 4. 6. So that that's one way of improving time aright, even by gracious and favoury Discourses. The neglect of this is the great sin of many Professors : Alas, how is it, as if *holy Conference* were banished out of the World ?

Chri-

Christians meet together, and much discourse passeth about this or the other matter, but it may be not one edifying word all the while: But what saith the Scripture? *Exhort one another daily*, Heb. 3. 13. As you have opportunity of daily converse you should take occasion to exhort and call upon one another, and say, how is it with you as to spirituals? have you got assurance yet? do you grow in Grace? how is it with your Soul, doth that prosper?

6. *Solitary times are also to be improved*: I say not only times of being in company, but times of being alone, are to be improved. Such seasons should be made use of for Prayer, Meditation, and Self-Examination, &c. We read concerning *Nathaniel* that Christ said to him, *When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee*; Joh. 1. 48. though no mortal eye beheld him, yet the Son of God that hath eyes like a Flame of fire looked upon him there: Jesus Christ who is God as well as man, saw *Nathaniel* when he was alone under the fig-tree: Indeed it is not said what *Nathaniel* was doing there; but it is very probable, that he was praying

praying or meditating, or about some such holy design, that Christ should take such special notice of him. So concerning *Isaac*, we read that he went out to *meditate in the field*, Gen. 24. 63. He retired himself into a solitary place, that so he might with the more freedom and convenience practise that much neglected, and yet profitable duty of meditation. So for *Jacob*, Gen. 32. 24. *Jacob was left alone and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day*. He spent a good part of the night in secret Prayer, none being there present but Christ and he. Yea, Christ himself hath taught us this, by his own blessed Example, *Mat. 14. 23*. *He went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when evening was come, he was there alone*. And the truth is, that a time of privacy is the fittest season for holy converse and communion with God, because then a man may freely and fully open his whole heart to God. Men have their special Corruptions, which it is not fit the World should hear of; yea all that are Christians indeed, have their special and sore temptations

tations that do molest them ; as for loose, formal Professors, they may go on smoothly and easily ; but as for such as have taken up not only the form, but the power of Godliness, they meet with many rubs and difficulties, and strong assaults from the great Enemy of Salvation : Now secret places are the fittest to complain to the Lord in about these temptations ; therefore times of privacy, may and must be taken hold on by Christians for such an end.

7. *The time wherein Gods Spirit doth strive with men is to be improved.* There are seasons wherein the holy Spirit is blessedly at work with the heart ; now these are seasons which ought carefully to be improved. If men be to set sail, they must take the opportunity when the wind serveth : So if they would be setting Sail towards Heaven, they must observe the gales of the Spirit ; they must lay hold on the opportunity, wherein the blessed breathings of the Spirit are afforded to them : These should be improved in order to Repentance, lest haply the spirit of the Lord

to be improved and redeemed.

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do forsake a man, and give him up to the hardness of his own heart for ever; as you have lately heard that with some sinners it is so. And these Seasons ought to be improved for Prayer, *Eph. 6.18. Pray always,* (*ἐν παντί καί ποτε*) *in every season, as the Greek phrase is, watching thereunto, &c.* You must watch when the Spirit of God stirs you up to Prayer, and then upon your knees, sometimes the Lord by his Spirit secretly moveth unto Prayer, yea, sometimes he puts the heart into a praying frame: Now that's a season of Grace which may not be neglected, without great danger to a mans Soul.

Lastly, *The present time is that which should carefully be improved; So Eccl. 12.1. Remember [Now] thy Creator.* Men, especially young men, when they are called upon to be mindful of God, and the things of God, and the great concerns of their Souls, are apt to put it off till *to morrow*, or sometimes *hereafter*; but the Holy Ghost saith *now*. Mind this matter without any further delays: Do not think to put off God with *Excuses*, or with

Tomorrows, but the first thing you do, make sure of an interest in him. 2 Cor. 6. 2, *Behold now is the accepted time ; Behold, now is the day of Salvation.* Satan saith, and a self-deceiving heart saith, *To morrow, to morrow ;* but the Lord saith, *Now, now : Yea*, there is a *double Behold* added to it, *Behold, behold, now, now* is the time for you to look after your Salvation, if ever you desire to be saved. But of this more in the Application of the point.

We proceed therefore to the second thing, namely, to shew what is implied in redeeming seasons of Grace, or, *When a man may be said to redeem the time ?*

For answer to that, 1. Herein is implied, *An heart to receive and do all the good that may be.* Except there be an heart to receive Spiritual good when it is offered, a man cannot be said to redeem time ; as *Solomon complains*, Prov. 17. 16. *Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a Fool to get Wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it.* Sometimes it is so, that there is a precious Sermon preached at a mans door; if he would come and hear, who knoweth

how

how much good might be done to his Soul: But he cometh not, and yet hath no sufficient Reason to excuse himself, only *he hath no heart to it*; therefore he is not worthy to be accounted a *Time-Redeemer*. So again, there must be a heart to do good. As the Apostle Exhorts, *Gal. 6. 10. As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the Household of Faith*: When a man doth seriously and conscientiously think with himself, how may I improve my time and talent most to the honour of God, and the good of men, and comfort of my own Soul, in the great day, and doth accordingly; such an one doth *redeem the time*. Though a man should be providentially disappointed as to actual performance, yet if indeed he hath an heart to lay hold on opportunities of receiving or doing Spiritual good, he is a *Time-Redeemer*.

2. Herein is implied *Wisdom to discern of Times and Seasons*. As it is said of the Children of *Issachar*, that they *had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do*, 1 Chron 12. 32. There is no

redeeming the time without wisdom; therefore the Apostle saith, *Walk wisely, redeeming the time*: And Solomon saith, *A wise mans heart discerneth both time and judgement*, Eccles. 8. 5. As in civil affairs, except a man know when the Market is, how should he take hold of the opportunity while the Market is up, to buy and furnish himself with what he stands in need of: So if a Man hath not wisdom to discern of times and seasons, he will never improve them aright; hence Christ complaineth of the Jews, *How is it that you do not discern this time*, Luk. 12. 56. and again, Chap. 19. 42. 44. *If thou hadst known in this day, the things that belong to thy peace. Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation*. They did not improve their day of Grace; therefore are said, *not to know their time*.

3. Herein is implied, *a willingness to part with those things that would hinder from receiving or doing good*: The Greek Word (*εἰς ἀγοράζουσαν*) which is here used, signifieth *to buy*. Now in buying there is alwayes a parting with something; as the

Gospel

Gospel speaketh of the wise Merchant, that *he parted with all that he had for the Pearl of great price*: So it is in buying, or *redeeming time*, there must be a parting with those things that would make a Man lose his time. The Original Word is a Metaphor taken from wise Merchants or Tradesmen, that prefer their profit above their ease and pleasure: So if a man would *redeem time*, he must forgo those things which would hinder him from glorifying God, or that would keep him from promoting the eternal Salvation of his own Soul; yea, and he must be content to put himself to some trouble and disadvantage, that he may promote the Spiritual and Eternal Welfare of other mens Souls; and this is here intended by the Apostle, *Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time*; as if he had said, take hold of opportunities to gain Infidels to Christ, though it should be to your own outward disadvantage; See that you do what you can to gain men to Christ, though you your selves should lose by it, as to temporal concerns.

4. When a man doth endeavour to make up *his former losses and mispence of time by a diligent improvement of the present season*, then he may be said to redeem time ; when a man hath lived and spent his time unthriftilly, but now he endeavours by double diligence to redeem, and as it were, to *buy back again* the time that's past and lost ; when he is made sensible, that he hath done little for God in former times, and therefore endeavours to live much unto, and do much service for God in Christ now, then he *redeems time*. As the Children of *Israel* in the last year of their being in the Wilderness, dispatched more way than in forty years before : So when a man doth more for God now in one year, than he hath done twenty or forty years : we may say that, that man *redeemeth time*.

Come we to the Use of the Point:

USE I. *Here is matter of sad Reproof unto those that do mispend precious time.* You shall have some that say, They do such a thing *to pass away time*, and such a thing is very good *to pass away time*. O
lamentable !

lamentable ! as if men had more precious time than they knew what in the world to do with, or how to bestow it ! And alas, how many are there, that spend their time exceeding unprofitably ; it may be in going from house to house, and there hearing or telling tales : Oh if that time which is spent in *vain jangling*, were spent in secret Communion with God, and in faithful endeavours to promote the welfare of the Souls of men, how comfortable, and how glorious would it be for such a man at the great day ! how would he then rejoyce that ever he lived upon the face of the Earth ! Alas there be that spend their time even in sinful practises, for which no time ought to be allowed. There is one practice which I hear much precious time is spent in, that I must needs bear my testimony against : That which I mean, is those unlawful Games of *Cards* and *Dice* : Those Games have alwayes been condemned by the Servants of God, as things that are in themselves unlawful. I use not to tell you much what Fathers say, else I might say, that *Cyprian*,
Clemens,

Clemens, Alexandrinus, Ambrose, Chrysostome, Austin, &c. have of old condemned such practices. Yea, in the dayes of Christian Emperors, there have been severe Laws against such *Gamesters*. In *Justinian's* time there was a Law, not only that no Man should play at Cards and Dice, but that no men should so much as be present to see others play; nay, even Heathens by the light of nature, have condemned such practises. The Philosopher speaketh against it in his *Morals*: An Hea:hen Poet sharply inveighs against it; and *Cicero* in one of his *Orationes* objects against *Antonius*, that he was a *Dice-player*, and one that entertained such *Gamesters* in his House. And amongst *Reformers*, these kind of Games have ever been disapproved. *Popish Authors* usually plead for the lawfulness of them, but *Protestants* generally write against them. And it must needs be acknowledged by all mens Consciences, that it is unlawful to spend so much time in any Recreations, as is usually spent in attending those Games by those that use them. There is a secret
Curse

Curse of God goeth along with them :
Hence it is, that if persons be once given
to this practice, they can know no bounds,
but spend day and night therein. Besides
there is therein a breach of the third
Commandment, inasmuch as these Games
are not without *Lottery*, though there
may be something of skill in them, yet
there is something of *Lottery*. Now a
Lot is a sacred thing wherein the Name
of God is much concerned : In all Lots
there is an appeal to Providence to decide
the matter in controversie. It is said con-
cerning a Lot, *that the whole disposing
thereof is of the Lord*, Prov. 16. 33. Hence
it is that Lots may not be used in trivial
matters : Search the Scriptures, and you
shall never find that Lots were used in
trivial, but only in weighty momentous
matters, which might be prayed over.
Now no man, whose Conscience is not
profligate, dare pray over his *Cards* and
Dice. Where we may not make a prayer
in word, we may not do it in act, or in
signs to signifie it, as 'tis in a Lot. And
it is a good Rule, *That practice which a man
dare*

dare not pray over, let him evermore suspect it for an unlawful practice. Moreover, as these Games are usually practised, there is in them a breach of the eighth Commandment, that is when men play for Money. If a man get anothers Goods at under price, this is Injustice, it is Theft, and a Transgression of the Rule of Righteousness: How much more to take from another his Estate for nothing at all in the lieu thereof, but only play. Every lawful way of getting is sanctified by Prayer which you heard but now that these Games are not; and therefore the Estate got thereby is unlawful gain. And in this respect also, the Name and Providence of God is abused therein: for when God hath by his Providence possessed a man of a just Estate, for him now to go and make a question, whether this Estate shall be his or another mans, and then decide the Controversie by *Dice*, is unworthily to abuse the good Providence of God. Again, this practice is of evil report, & therefore ought not to be amongst Christians: The Scripture bids us follow
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to be improved and redeemed.

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the things that are of good report, Phil. 4. 8. which sheweth that things of evil report in the World ought to be avoided by those that profess the Name of Christ: Now so are these Games. You heard how *Heathens* by the light of Nature condemned them, and shall *Christians* take up such practices? The People of God are offended and grieved at such things; and therefore I beseech those of you that have been guilty here, for the Lords sake to reform *this evil*. O it is a sad thing that such a practice should prevail in *New-England*; that once was, and ever ought to be, a *land of uprightness*. Yet I hear, that the *Rising Generation*, are many of them, tainted with this vice, not only in this great Town, but in many places in the Countrey: This is a sad and a sure sign of Degeneracy in the *Rising Generation*; For twenty years ago, there was no such practice known amongst Children born and bred in *New-England*: And therefore that now it should be so common, doth testifie against young ones, that they are *degenerate Plants*.

I have not spoken this out of the least prejudice against any that have been guilty this way; only that so this evil might be repented of, or however that I might witness against sin and for God this day in this particular.

USE II. Exhortation, *O labour to improve present seasons of Grace:* and for that end consider seriously a few things;

I. *That the present time is the only time which men can say is theirs.* As for the time past, that's none of yours, that's gone never to be seen again, *Psal. 90. 9. We spend our dayes as a tale that is told.* Why? a tale that is told can never be untold again; so the time that is past, will never be here again. A man may lose other things, and find them again; he may lose his Estate, and have it again, or he may lose his Name, and recover it again; but if he lose his time, he shall never have it again: It is impossible that yesterday should be here again, or that the time past should be present, and not past. As I remember, I have read of a poor Woman, that being in great distress of Conscience, many

many Ministers came to speak with her, and they could have nothing from her, only she looked upon them with a ghastly countenance, and cried, *Call Time again! Call time again!* except you can bring back time again, you can do nothing for me. This was the doleful effect of neglecting *the present season* when time was. Oh think what they in Hell would give to have those hours, which they have lost in sin and vanity! They would give ten thousand thousand Worlds if they had it, that they might again have a space to repent in; yea, that they might have but one hour to pray and seek the face of God, with any hopes of mercy, but it cannot be. And for time to come, you cannot say, that that is yours, for that is altogether uncertain: A man cannot live a moment beyond the time appointed. One miserably cried out upon a Death-Bed, *A World of Wealth, for an inch of time, a world of Wealth for an inch of time.* And another when dying, said, *If I had ten thousand Worlds, I would give them all, that I might live one day longer.* Remember
the

the Scripture, which saith, *Boast not thyself of to morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*, Prov. 27.1. Men have not, as *Hezekiah* had, a promise of life for fifteen years. It may be thou hast not fifteen dayes, nay, not fifteen hours to live: if thou wert sure thou shouldst live but one week, how wouldst thou redeem the time? yet it may be thou shalt not live one day, and darest thou then mispend thy time?

Consider, 2. *The exceeding danger which is, in neglecting the present season*. This is marvelous dangerous, because there is no promise for to morrow, but only for *to day* Heb. 3.7. [*to day*] if you will hear his voice; and again, ver. 14. *Exhort one another [Daily] while it is called [Today,]* and ver. 15. [*To day*] if you hear his voice *harden not your hearts*. Thus doth the Lord say, *To day, To day, To day*; but you will no where find in all the Book of God, any promise, that, To morrow if you will hear his voice, it shall go well with you. The Devil and a mans own treacherous heart may promise for to morrow, but

God

God doth not so. It may be either *now* or *never*; all times will not serve for soul-saving purposes. Hence is that, *Isa. 55.6* *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.* There is then a time wherein God may be found, and a time wherein he will not be found: if you delay and put off God for the present, it may be he will not be found for the future; Oh therefore make thy peace with God *quickly*, lest it be too late, *Mat. 5. 25.* Know this for certain, that the longer you delay your Repentance, the harder work you will find of it; the longer any man liveth in sin, the harder it is for him to turn from sin, *Jer. 13. 23.* *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may you do good, that are accustomed to do evil.* This very delusion, that men will repent hereafter, and therefore that they may venture to neglect the *present season*, hath been the eternal ruin of millions of Souls. Oh Sirs, if some of you could but speak with your old Companions in sin, that are dead and gone to their own place, they would tell you dis-

mal stories to this purpose; they would say to you, *Ab fools that we were, to neglect the present season, out of a vain confidence, that hereafter we would repent and turn to God*: This hath brought us into the place of Torment, from whence there is no Redemption.

Consider, 3. *That the Lord will surely call you to an account one day for your time.* You shall all appear before the Son of God one day, and give an account how you have lived and spent your time in this World: Men must give an account how they have *improved Talents*, especially this *great and precious Talent of time*. The Lord keeps an exact account how many Years, dayes, hours, is allowed to every man in this World, and will reckon with men for all one day. As I remember it is storied of *Ignatius*, that if he did hear the Clock strike, he would say, *There is another hour gone which I must answer for*. Oh if men did think sadly of this, how would they improve their time? Did they know how great a sin it is to mispend so much as one hour, would they spend it may be whole days in vanity? Con-

Consider, 4. *That you have lost much precious time already* ; and therefore it is high time to look about you, and to consider well how you may improve the present season, 1 Pet. 4 3 *The time past of our life may suffice us, to have wrought the will of the Gentiles* : So the time past which hath been mispent is enough, and too much to be lost. Alas, men spend the greatest part of their time either in doing nothing or in doing amiss : How much time is there spent in excessive sleep, or in needless Recreations, or in unprofitable discourses ? nay, how much time is spent in sin ? All the dayes of a mans irregeneracy, are days of vanity : All that time (which as to the most of you hath been the greatest part of your lives) hath been utterly lost. Hence Paul speaks of his being born out of due time, 1 Cor. 15 8. Because afore his Conversion, his life was a death rather than a life, he lost all that time, even as if he had not been born into the World. An old man once said, when dying, *I have lived but seven years* ; because he was converted but seven years before his death,

and before, that he made account he was as a man that did not live, as a man that had no time or being in the World.

Confid. 5. *Your time in this World is but short* ; therefore improve it, it's pitty to lose any part of a short time. Christ lived not much above two and thirty years, therefore did he go up and down doing good, and was wonderfully careful to improve his time to the best advantage : who knoweth how soon thy Soul may launch forth into the Ocean of Eternity ? Thy time will quickly be gone ; hence *Job* saith, *Chap. 9 ver. 25, 26. My dayes are swifter than a Post, they flee away, they are passed away as the swift ships, as the Eagle that hasteth to the prey.* When men ride Post, you know, they go swiftly, but a Ship in the Sea hath a swifter motion, and *flying* is swifter than that, and an Eagle is amongst the swiftest of Birds, and the motion of an Eagle when hastening to the Prey, is more swift than ordinary : All this is said, to shew how fast a mans time doth spend away. If a man hath much work to do, and but little to

to be improved and redeemed. 101

time to do it in, he had need to bestir himself. Suppose the sun to be almost set, and yet much work must of necessity be done e're the Sun be down; How needful is it to improve that little time? So'tis here, every man hath much work of absolute necessity to be done, many duties to perform, many corruptions to subdue, many sins to repent of; and if all this be not done before Sun-set, a man's undone for ever, and therefore improve his time he must.

Confid. 6. *Eternity depends upon the well improving of a moment.* According to the Seed-time in this life, such will the Harvest be in the World to come for ever, Gal. 6. 7, 8. Oh! *Eternity! Eternity! Eternity!* is a solemn and awakening Meditation. I am perswaded if you would when you come home, think seriously one quarter of an hour about *Eternity*, it would by the blessing of God tend to *awaken you* to improve your short time in this World. Remember then and often think on it, that thou must shortly go either into *everlasting weal*, or else into *everlasting woe*, ac-

ording as time in this World hath been improved or neglected. Within a few dayes thy immortal Soul shall be either in *eternal joy* or else in *eternal torment*; that after thou hast been therein; as many millions of Ages, as there are Stars in Heaven; as many millions of Ages, as there are piles of Grass upon the Earth; as many millions of Ages, as there are sands upon the Sea-shore, thou shalt then be no nearer unto an end of that condition, than thou wast at the first moment when thou didst enter into it. Oh, I do beleech you for Gods sake, for Christs sake, and for your immortal Souls sake, that you would think of this seriously, though it be but one quarter of an hour together.

Quest. What shall we do that we may improve time?

Ans. I'll mention but one Rule, and that is this, *Live every day, as if it were your last day.* Let me preach, as if I were never to preach more; and do you hear, as if you were never to hear more: Do nothing, say nothing, think nothing, but what you would

would be willing to do, if you were to die next day.

If you were sure, that as soon as this Sermon is ended, your naked Souls should appear before God the Judge of all, how then would you hear? Verily if these truths were realized to the hearts of men, they would labour to redeem their time, yea, they would watch and pray.

Now blessed is the Servant, whom the Lord at his coming shall find so doing.

*The true Fearers of God will practice
Family Prayer.*

*Acts 10.2. One that feared God with all his
House——And prayed alway.*

IN this Chapter, we have an account of the great acceptance which *Cornelius* his Prayers found with God, together with the gracious effects following thereupon.

In the two first verses *Cornelius* is described. 1. From the City where he dwelt, viz. *Cesaria*. 2. From his Calling, he was a *Souldier*; and no common *Souldier*, but a *Centurion*. 3. From the Nation which he did belong unto; he was an *Italian*, a Commander belonging to the *Italian Band*. And indeed *Cornelius* is a *Roman Name*. 4. He is described from his Religion, in this verse, *he was a devout man, h. e.* He was though a *Roman*, and so a *Gentile* by nature, yet no meer *Heathen* in respect of his Religion, but a *Profelyte*. Elsewhere *Profelyt's* are stiled *Devout Persons*, *Act 17.4*. We read of *Devout Greeks*, that is, such as were *Profelytes* to the *Jewish Religion*. Hence also, *Cornelius* is described to be one that feared God, *h. e.* that did worship the only true God. Thus *Act. 13.26*. *Children of the stock of Abraham, and whoever amongst you feareth God*; meaning such as though they were not (as the *Jews are*) descended from *Abraham*, nevertheless worshipped the God of *Abraham* as the *Jews did*. These Fearers of God are in verse 43. called *Religious Profelytes*.
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There were two sorts of *Profelytes* amongst the *Jews* of old.

1. Some that were stiled *Profelytes of the Covenant*, those were Circumcised, and also admitted to all priviledges in the Church of *Israel*; no difference being made either as to Civil or Church Communion between them; and those that were natural *Israelites*.

2. Those that were stiled *Profelytes of the Gate*. These did own the God of *Israel* to be the only true God; and hoped for Salvation by the *Messiah*; and did endeavour to frame their lives according to the holy Rules of the Moral Law. *Cornelius* was a *Profelyte* of this, and not of the former sort. And hence *Peter* was unwilling to converse with him, until such time as God by a vision commanded him so to do. The truth of *Cornelius* his Religion is in this verse intimated by two things.

1. In that he was careful, not only to pray unto God himself alone, but that his Family should do so too. *He did Worship God with all his House*, h.e. with his whole Family.

Family. The house is frequently in the Scripture put for the Family, *Gen. 7. 1. & 30. 30. Exod. 12. 3.*

2. In that he did thus *alway*. He did not only pray with his Family once or so, but *alwayes* : that is to say, *alway* in the due and stated seasons for that duty : the meaning is not, as though *Cornelius* did spend his time in nothing else but Prayer and Religious Exercises, but that he was constant in his Attendance unto that duty in the seasons appointed for that end.

The Doctrine which the Words do therefore afford unto us, is,

That the true Fearers of God will be constant in the practice of that duty of Family Prayer.

In order to the clearing of this Truth, there are three things to be enquired into.

1. How it doth appear that Family Prayer is a duty ?

2. What is implied in being constant therein, or in doing thus *alway* ?

3. The Reasons why they that truly fear God do thus practice.

Q. 1. *How doth it appear that Family Prayer is a duty?* *Ans.*

Ans 1. *The Scripture doth injoyne this.* God in his Word, commands men to *pray with all Prayer*, Eph. 6. 18. Not only prayer in Closets, and in solemn Assemblies, but in Families, is comprehended under that expression of *All Prayer*. Nor can a Man be said to pray with *all Prayer*, except he doth practice publick, secret, and Family Prayer. And in the Scripture, Husbands and Wives are required to live lovingly together, *that their prayers be not hindred*, 1 Pet. 3. 7. what Prayers? Surely Family Prayers. They that are contending and quarrelling one with another, are very unfit to go to Prayer together: Therefore Husband and Wife should live in love, that so they may not be indisposed to pray together in their Family. Again, the Scripture declareth, that men should take care that their Families as well as themselves serve God. Fathers are to bring up their Children, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph. 6. 4. which they cannot do except they pray with them, and by example as well as precept, let them see that God ought to be wor-

worshipped and prayed unto. Thus *Joshua* was resolved to do, *Chap. 24 v. 15. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* *Joshua* did exhort the Children of *Israel*, that they should all of them in their Houses serve God, which doth imply Prayer unto him; inasmuch as prayerless Families cannot be said to be God-serving, God-fearing Families.

2. As there are Scripture-precepts requiring this duty, so there are *Scripture-Examples, which God hath caused to be Recorded in his Word for our instruction and imitation.* We find that the Lord Christ, who hath left himself for an example in this as well as in other things, for us to follow; did pray with his Family, *Luk 9. 18. As he was alone praying, his Disciples (who were his Family) were with him.* And when Christ did keep the Passeeover with his Domestick Disciples alone, it is certain that he prayed with them, *Mat. 26. 18. &c.* *David* also was wont to Worship God with his Family. And was resolved to continue in that practice all his days. Hence he could say, as *Pf. 101. 2. I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* And we

read concerning him, that after he had been attending the Worship of God in publick, *he returned to bless his house*, 1 Chr. 16.43. so that he did not think it enough to Worship God in a publick solemn Assembly amongst his People, but when he cometh home, he prayeth with his family, that the blessing of God might be there.

3. *Of old there were not only publick but private Family Sacrifices.* Jonathan relates concerning David, that he said to him *our Family hath a Sacrifice in the City, and my Brother commanded me to be there*, 1 Sam. 20.29. which undoubtedly were not without Family Prayers. And although Sacrifices in a legal, literal sense are ceased, in these dayes of the Gospel; Christ by that one offering of himself, having put an end thereto, yet spiritual Sacrifices must be offered up still, 1 Pet. 2. 5. *Ye are a spiritual house, an holy Priest-hood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ.* When Christians offer up prayers and praises unto the Lord, these are spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ.

And indeed every Believer is a spiritual Priest. Jesus Christ *hath made us Priests unto God and his Father*, Rev. 1.6. And inasmuch as he is a Priest in his own Family, therefore he ought to offer up spiritual Sacrifices there. Every Master of a Family is a Prophet in his own Family, because he ought to instruct them in the things of God: and a King there, inasmuch as he ought to govern his Family according to the Rules of the Word of God, and a Priest also, for that he ought to offer up Spiritual Sacrifices therein.

4. *The very light of nature teacheth men that Family Prayer is a duty.* Hence the Gentiles that had no Scripture to direct them, yet have made conscience of *Family Worship*. They had their *Penates*, household Gods, whom they did adore. Yea, *Mahometans* at this day, Worship their god not only in publick Assemblies, but in their Families. So that Men who call themselves *Christians*, and yet acknowledg no God in their Families, are in that thing worse than *Infidels*. Many *Heathen People*, nay *Turks*, will at the Day of Judgment

will Pray with their Families. III

ment rise up against such pretended Christians, and condemn them.

Quest: 2. *What is implied in a mans praying [Alway] with his Family ?*

Ans. This Praying *alway*, implieth frequency in that duty. Family Prayer should be attended daily. In that sense the Phrase is sometimes used in the Scripture. As when he is said, that *Mephibosheth* did eat (*continually*, or as the Hebrew word *Tamid* signifieth) *alway* at the Kings Table ; the meaning is that it was his daily custom so to do. Thus *Cornelius* with his House prayed *alway* ; Family Prayer was daily observed in that House. Families need daily supplies of mercy. And there are Family occasions to be attended every day, which Masters in Families are concerned to look up to God, that his blessing may be thereon : And there are daily mercies which they ought to bless God for. Yea, it is good to practice this Duty more than once every day, *h: e:* in the Morning and in the Evening also. It is a good thing to praise the Lord, and shew forth his loving-kindness in the morning, and

and every evening, *Psal. 92. 1, 2.* The continual offering under the Law was that whereby Prayer was typified: and that was to be both at morning and at the even, *Exod: 29: 38: Numb: 28: 3, 4:* So should it be as to Family Prayer: And therefore it is very observable, that the Apostle speaking to *Masters in Families*, useth that expreffion, *continue in Prayer*, *Col: 4: 2:* In which words he doth evidently allude unto the continual offering under the Law, which was to be attended daily, both at morning and at even; you (saith he) that are Masters of *Families*, forget not the continual offering of Prayer, which you ought to present before the Lord. It is as if he had said, pray constantly morning and evening in your *Families*.

Therefore,

2. *This Expression implieth perseverance.* Men should not only begin to practice this duty, but they ought to hold on therein, all their dayes. Christ hath taught us *that men ought alway to pray and not to faint* *Luk: 18: 1:* And we are bid to *pray without ceasing*, *1 Thess: 5: 17:* As there ought

to

to be perseverance in attending unto the publick Worship of God, on the times appointed for that end: As *Hezekiah* professeth that he had taken up a resolution *to praise God all the dayes of his life in the House of the Lord*, *Isai. 38. 20*. So should Men praise the Lord, and pray to him all the dayes of their lives in their own houses. There ought to be *perseverance in all Prayer*, and therefore Christians are to continue all their dayes in the practice of private or family, as well as in publick and in closet-prayer: So may they be said to do as *Cornelius* did, even to pray alway, *Eph. 6. 18*.

Q. 3. Whence is it that the true Fearers of God do thus?

Reas. 1. Because they that truly fear God respect the honour of his Name. They cannot but desire that God might be honoured every where, and more especially in their own Families. Now Prayer honours God. Hence is that expression, *Mat. 15. 8. They honour me with their lips*: when men pray unto God with their lips, they honour him therewith: and when
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they pray with their hearts, as well as their lips, they honour him with both. As when they neglect this so great a duty, they with-hold that honour from God, which is due unto him from his creatures, *Isai 43.23. Thou hast not honoured me with thy Sacrifices.* So doth the Lord say to Masters of Families, that pray not with their Houses, thou hast not honoured me with thy Prayers. But as for those that call upon his Name, their Prayers and praises glorifie him. When men own the Lord to be the God of their Families they put honour upon him. And so it is when Family Worship is duely upheld.

Reas. 2. They that truly fear God, are desirous that the interest of Religion should be upheld and promoted. One that is truly Religious himself cannot but desire that others may be so too. *Paul* being himself a real Christian, earnestly wished that others were in that respect as he was. When *Agrippa* said to him, *thou almost perswadest me to be a Christian*, he replied, *I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both at-*
most

will pray with their Families. 115

most & altogether such as I am, except these Bonds, Act. 26. 28, 29. So it is, (and cannot but be) where there is true Grace. Especially they are desirous that those who are related to them: and are of the same Family with them, may be acquainted with the good wayes of the Lord. Therefore they will make Conscience, not only to pray for them, but to pray with them; since thereby Religion and the Fear of God will be promoted. And to have Religion in Families is the way to have it elsewhere. Families are the Nurseries of all Societies. If Religion should not be upheld there, it would fall to the ground every where.

USE I. *For Reprehension*: And there are many that fall under just and sad Reproof from this Doctrine.

I. It condemns those that live in the total neglect of this duty of Family Prayer. And what is like to come on prayerless Families at last? Let prayerless Fathers, and prayerless Masters hear the Word of the Lord, and tremble at it. O that you would consider, how you expose

not only your selves but Families, to the vengeance of Heaven. How often have you been put in mind of that awful Scripture, *Jer. 10. 25. Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not.* What's that to us? some one will be ready to say; we are no Heathen, we are all Christians: but mark what follows, *and upon the Families that call not upon thy Name.* Not only professed *Heathen*, but Families that live like *Heathen* without any prayer, the fury of the Almighty will come pouring down from Heaven upon them: Hence are temporal judgements upon Families many times. The Lord kills Children with death, because Parents do not shew them an example of Religion to pray with them in the Family as well as for them in secret. Yea, the Souls of your poor Children are ruined by this sin of yours. And O how sad will it be, when God shall require the *blood of the Souls of Children*, at the hands of their prayerless Fathers; and the blood of the Souls of Servants at the hands of their prayerless Masters. Think with you *selves what answer you will make before*

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Jesus Christ the Son of God at the last and great day. If thy Children shall be thine accusers before the Lord then; if any of them shall stand before the Lord Jesus in the day when he shall judge the World, and say, Lord, there is the man that was my Father, I never heard him pray in all my life, and that made me live in the neglect of God also; or if thy servants shall any of them say, Lord, there is the man that was my Master, I lived in his house so many moneths, but I never heard him praying unto God all that time, what answer wilt thou then make for thy self? you shall not be able to plead ignorance. For I will then call Heaven and Earth to record against you, that you were often told of your duty in this particular. And yet I hear some say, that there are many prayerless families in this great Town. The thing is lamentable, if it be so. What, for men that call themselves Christians, to have no prayer in their families? for men that live under the light of the Gospel, to live without Prayer in their families! for men that live in *New-England*, and

that have lived in *Boston*, not so much as to pray in their families ! Such have known to do good, and yet have not done it ; therefore sin and guilt and wrath most fearful doth abide them. And this word reacheth Masters of *Vessels* that never pray with their Ships-Company, who are their family, with whom they ought to worship God continually.

2. This reproveth those that do not pray in their Families *All way*. There are some that pray in their families ; but when is it ? once in a week perhaps. It may be on the Sabbath day, they will pray in their families, and serve God therein no more all the dayes of the week after. Is this to pray *alway* when there are such wide and woful gaps in prayer ? It is thy duty *to serve God all the dayes of thy life*, Luk. i. 75. Dost thou serve God all thy dayes, when thou dost serve him, and pray to him, but one day in seven ? God will not be put off so. When once thou shalt see the day wherein thy family shal stand in no need of God's blessing ; neglect Prayer in thy family for that day ; but til then willingly

ly omit it not under any pretence whatsoever. And are there not some, that time was when they would worship God with their families; but they are fallen away, and have cast off the practice that is good? O foolish creatures, you did run well, but who hath driven you back? Remember the word that was spoken by the Lord Jesus, *Luk. 9. 26. No man having put his hand to the Plough, and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God.* Didst thou begin to pray with thy family? This was to set thy hand to the Lords Plough: Wo to thee if thou drawest it back again.

3. This reproveth those who do that in families which is quite contrary unto praying & serving God therein. Are there not families in this place, wherein there is Drinking to excess, Gaming, wantonness, Uncleanneſs? Indeed, when such deeds of darkness are brought to light, they are put to shame amongst us; and it is a great mercy to the Land, that open prophaneſs and wickedneſs is punished, but the Lord ſeeth what is done in private Houſes. He knoweth who they are that *assemble themselves*

by troops in the Harlots House; Jer. 5. 7. And are there not families in the which instead of Prayer, there is Cursing, Swearing, Sabbath-breaking and the like Transgressions that provoke the glorious eyes of the Holy Majesty of Heaven? Let the Masters of such families look to themselves. For the Sabbath-breaking, and other prophanenesses that are indulged in their families will be charged upon them who ought to rule their houses better. *Exo. 20. 10.*

Use. 2. Of Exhortation: To be constant in the practice of this necessary duty They that are so, their labour shal not be in vain in the Lord. If they be sincere therein, special mercy will follow: We see it in this example of *Cornelius*. He worshipped God with his House, and prayed *always*; and what special notice did the Lord take of him? those prayers were not lost. And sometimes when outward Judgements come, God sheweth peculiar mercy to praying families. I remember I have read of a Town in *Switzerland*, that was destroyed with an Earth-quake, excepting only one House, where it so fell out, that
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at the time when the Earth-quake happened, the Master of the House was at prayer with his family. But especially spiritual blessings, are wont to follow upon the sincere attendance unto this duty. If there be a praying Father, it is to be hoped that there will be praying Children: And if there be a praying Master, it is to be hoped there will be praying Servants. And is not that a blessed thing for a man to have the Children and Servants of his own family praying for him continually? Thus do we read concerning *Abrahams* Servants, *Gen 24. 12.* He said, *O Lord God of my Master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my Master Abraham.* How came *Eliezer* to be a praying Servant? doubtless, he observed that his Master was much in prayer; and such an Example might be well followed.

I shall only answer two or three Objections, and conclude.

Obj. 1. Some one may say, *I have not time to pray in my Family.* My business and worldly occasions are such as I cannot attend prayer.

Ans.

Ans. No man shall fare the worse as to his outward Estate, because he doth make conscience to set some time apart daily to serve God ; no mans Family shall be the poorer, but rather the richer for that. O that you would remember and consider more on that Scripture, *Mat. 6. 33. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.* And it is certainly better to want time for other things, than to take no time to pray in. Yea, a man should rather deny himself a little of his natural rest and sleep, than to live an ungodly and prayerless life. Nor is it needful, or indeed convenient, that Family duties should be ordinarily long and tedious ; and therefore the objection is a vain excuse. There are others in the World, that have as much business upon their hands as thou hast, who nevertheless can find time to pray in their Closets, and in their Families too. Had not *David* as little time to spare, and as much business to attend as any man can ordinarily pretend unto ; yet he *always* found time to pray in. Let thy Conscience speak

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Speak; canst thou not find time for other things that are of less concernment? thou canst find time it may be to sit in some Tavern, and there to discourse, the Lord knoweth about what. If that time which is spent in vain, unprofitable Discourse, were spent in Communion with God, it would be happy for thee. Canst thou find time for vain Discourse, and yet not find time for Prayer? and canst thou then think that God will ever find a time to save thy poor soul? deceive not thy self, thou must be another man, or that time will never come.

Obj. 2. *I am ashamed to pray in my Family?*

Ans, What ashamed to own God, and the Lord Jesus Christ! dost thou not know that that's the way for a man to lose his Soul for ever? see else what the Lord Jesus hath spoken, *Mark 8. 3* last verses. *What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole World and lose his own Soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul: whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sin-
ful*

generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels. If thou art ashamed of prayer, thou art ashamed to own the wayes of Christ: and then what will become of thy precious and immortal Soul?

Obj. 3. *I would pray in my Family, but I cannot, I have not the gift of utterance and expression?*

Ans. 1. *It is better for thee to make use of a form then not to pray at all.* I confess, I look upon it as sinful to make use of those *Forms of Prayer* which are taken out of the *Popes Mass-Book*, because in so doing men put too much honour upon an Idol. It is also true that the imposition of *Forms of Prayer* is unwarrantable; yet all use of *Forms* is not prohibited in the Scripture, witness the *Form of Blessing* therein expressed. Learned and judicious Mr. Cartwright, doth from *Luk. 24. 35.* conjecture, that ordinarily Christ used the same words in his *Blessing at Meal-times*, with his *Domestick Disciples*. Now there is no man of ordinary understanding, but he

he may attain unto a Form of Prayer; and he had better make use of that, than to live without any Worship of God at all in his Family. But I am far from perswading you to take up with Forms.

Therefore,

2. *Practice, and that will make you able.*

As in other things practice maketh men ready and able, so it is in respect of the gift of Prayer. Some that when they began first to Pray, were able to make but poor work of it; by frequent practice have attained unto an excellent gift in Prayer. And there are some who complain they cannot Pray, whenas it is because they do not practise. If they would set upon practice, God would be with them. And O that I could prevail with those of you, that make this Objection against praying in your Families; to go home and make trial. I am perswaded that if you would try, and set upon the practice of *Family Prayer* in earnest, the Lord God would be with you.

3. *Labour for the true fear of God in your hearts.* No man that truly fears God, but he can pray in some measure, as you heard from *Psal. 32.6. Every one that is godly shall pray.* Grace will make a man sensible of his spiritual wants, and that will set him a praying. They that see themselves perishing will cry to God for Salvation. So it is with the godly man. Yea, where there is true grace, there will be Family Prayer. The Lord saith, *He will pour upon the Inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace,* and then Families, Families, would pray & mourn apart, *Zec. 12.10.*

4. *Be much in secret Prayer:* Go into thy closet; there beg for Grace; yea, pray for the Spirit of Prayer. That the Lord would be pleased to give his Holy Spirit unto you, and thereby enable you to pray. And by praying in thy closet, thou wilt be made able to pray with thy Family. So mayest thou become like to *Cornelius,* who feared God with all his house, and prayed alway.

*The sincere Servants of God will make
Conscience of Secret Prayer.*

2 Tim. 1. 3. *Withont ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my Prayers day and night.*

THe Apostle *Paul* in this Verse doth intimate two things :

1. His own sincerity in serving God. He freely confelleth himself to be the Lords Servant, *God whom I serve.* And there are two expressions, both which may denote his sincerity therein. One is that of his serving God *from his fore-fathers.* He served the same God, and after the same manner that his fore-fathers had done. As for his immediate fore-fathers they were *Jews* and *Pharisees*; and time was when he had served God as they had taught him : but those words may have respect to more remote Fathers, *viz. The holy Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, &c.* Another expression denoting the Apostles

postles sincerity, is, that of his serving God with a pure Conscience, which implieth that he was ever careful to act according to the Light of his Conscience; so indeed he was before his conversion unto Christ, *Act. 13. 1.* It implieth also, that his heart was purified by Faith in the Lord Jesus. For only they have a pure Conscience in the sight of God who are purged from the guilt of sin, in the blood of Christ. It implieth moreover an holy conversation; a due respect both to first and second Table duties. Mens Consciences are wont to be according to their actions: evil actions will pollute the Conscience: yea, the expression imports inward as well as outward serving God, *Rom. 1. 9.*

2. The Apostle in this verse, intimateth his love and affection unto *Timothy*. Both in that he did give thanks to God for him. So the verse begins, *I thank God*, namely for *Timothy*, partly in that *Timothy* had such a great respect for *Paul*; and it is matter of thankfulness unto God, when he giveth a man a great interest in the hearts of others who fear the Lord though

in gifts his Inferiors. He saith in the next verse, *I am mindful of thy tears*. Probably in those words, he may have respect unto the tears which *Timothy shed*, at his parting with the Apostle, when he removed from *Ephesus*: and he did bless God for the Grace which he saw in *Timothy*; that there was *Faith unfeigned in him, which dwelt first in his Grandmother Lois, and in his Mother Eunice*, ver 5. We should bless God for the Grace we see in others, and especially in young men; *Paul* was now aged, and hastening out of the World; but he thanked God, when he saw that *Timothy* a young man did inherit the Graces of his godly Predecessors. And he must needs rejoyce the more to see how Religion and the fear of God was propagated from Generation to Generation, even to the third Generation.

Again, he testified his affection towards *Timothy*, by being abundant in Prayer for him. We find that this Apostle doth begin another Epistle after the same manner signifying his affection to those he wrote unto, by declaring how he did give
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thanks and pray in their behalf, *Rom. 1.8, 9.* The Prayers here referred unto, must of necessity be understood of his secret Prayers. For we cannot in reason suppose that he did alwayes remember *Timothy* in publick, but in his secret addressees to the Throne of Grace; which shews that He was constant and conscionable in the *practice* of that sort of Prayer.

From which consideration the *Doctrine* is,
That the sincere Servants of God, will make conscience to practise that duty of Secret Prayer, day and night without ceasing.

There are three things that may here be enquired into.

1. How it doth appear that the sincere servants of God, will make conscience of *practising* that duty of secret prayer?

2. What is implied in this expression of praying day and night without ceasing?

3. The Reasons why Men especially sincere Christians should *practise* this duty.

Q. 1. How doth it appear that the sincere Servants of God will make conscience of practising that duty of Family Prayer?

Ans.

Ans. *The many Instances Recorded in the Scripture, concerning the faithful Servants of God, who have conscientiously practised this duty, are an evidence of the truth of this Doctrine.* As to the great and essential duties of Religion, all that truly fear God, practise alike: As the Apostle doth here intimate, where he saith, *I serve God from my fore-Fathers.* A true Servant of God, will follow the pious Example of those that have gone before him walking in the same way of Holiness, which they have done, *Prov. 2.20. Heb.6.12.* Now concerning this duty of Secret Prayer, we find many Examples (both in the Old Testament, and in the New) of the Lords Servants who have thus practised; and that as to all sorts of Men, Superiors, Inferiors, Fathers, Children, Masters, Servants, who have had the fear of God planted in their hearts; thus did *Abraham*, *Gen. 18. 23.* and *Eliezer*, *Abraham's* godly Servant, *Gen. 24.12.* And *Isaac* his gracious Son; it is noted of him, *ver.63. That he went out to meditate;* or (as the *Hebrew* word *Lasuach* may be read) *to pray.* The word

signifieth both to pray and to meditate, and it is not improbable but that *Isaac* did at that time, nothing but what was his daily custom to do, even retire himself from all company, for secret Prayer and meditation. And the like we read concerning *Jacob*, that he did wrestle with the Lord in secret Prayer, *Gen. 32. 24.* They are not the spiritual seed of *Jacob* that never do thus. I might mention *Hezekiah*, *Daniel*, *Jeremiah* *Peter*, and many other holy Servants of God, of whom we read in the Scripture, that they did practise this duty. Yea, we have the greatest Example that ever was, set before us for our imitation in this particular, that is Christs own Example; of whom it is said, that *He departed into a solitary place and there prayed*, *Mark 1.35.* *That he went apart to Pray*, *Mat. 14.23.* *That he withdrew himself and prayed*, *Luk. 5. 16.* And as the Lord Jesus Christ said, respecting another duty, *I have given you an Example that ye should do as I have done*, *Joh: 13:15:* so doth he say as to this duty of Secret Prayer: *I have given you an Example, and caused*

it to be entred upon everlasting Record, that so you that are my Disciples may in this follow me; and truly the sincere Disciples of Christ, will make conscience, *so to walk as he walked*, 1 Joh: 2: 6: They will strive to write after the blessed Copy which their Master Christ hath set before them.

2: *The truth is further evident, in that every sincere Servant of God doth make Conscience of obeying all his Commandments*, Psal: 119: 6: *Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy Precepts.* Now the Lord hath commanded men that they should Worship him, not only in publick, and in Families, but in secret also, Eph: 6: 18: *Pray with all Prayer*: we have formerly shewed, that secret Prayer is in that precept enjoined, as well as publick and Family Prayer. And when the Lord in his Word saith to men, *Commune with your hearts*, Psal: 4: 4: those two great duties wherein much of Religion doth consist, viz: Self-Examination, and secret Prayer are implied: Yea, this Duty is most expressly commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ

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Christ, who saith *When thou prayest enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, Mat. 6. 6* The sincere man doth not live in the commission of any known sin, nor in the wilful omission of any known duty. Surely then not in the omission of so great and known, and plainly commanded duty as this of secret Prayer, is :

3. *He that is sincere doth in special aim at approving himself in the sight of God.* Hence is that expression of *Godly sincerity 2 Cor. I. 12.* because the sincere man doth especially desire to have God's approbation. And therefore he abstains from secret sins, as *Joseph* did ; yea, he dare not so much as in his thoughts give way unto that which he knoweth sinful, because he remembers that the eye of God is upon him, and doth therefore study to approve himself, not only unto men, but unto God. Hence also he practiseth secret duties, which the Lord alone is witness of. This we see in *Nathaniel*, that *Israelite* indeed in whom there was no reigning guile, *Joh. I. 47. 48.* when that sincere *Israelite* was alone

lone under the Fig-tree, no doubt praying there; The Son of God who hath eyes like a Flame of Fire saw him, and did highly approve of his sincerity, of which the spirit that breathed in his secret Prayers was a great discovery.

4. *They that are sincere do in a peculiar manner delight in those duties wherein the greatest intimacy with God is to be enjoyed.*

That's one difference between an Hypocrite and a sincere Child of God. An Hypocrite will rest in the external performance of duty, though he hath no communion with God therein, whereas one that is sincere doth aim at that in duty; and therefore the more intimacy of Communion with God, is to be enjoyed, the more careful is he not to neglect such a duty.

Now this is true concerning *Secret Prayer*. Did *Abraham*, did *Jacob*, did *Moses*, did *Daniel*, & other Servants of the Lord, whom we read of in the *Scripture*, ever meet with more of God, then when they were in secret, pouring out their hearts before him? Intimate Friends when they are a-

lone, can speak more freely, and have a fuller communion then when others are by : so it is here. A *Believer* cannot so freely express himself before the Lord as to many particulars when others are by, as he can when there is none present but God and he. In secret places, he can speak his whole heart ; and pour out his soul into the bosome of God, and of Jesus Christ.

Q. 2. What is implied in this expression, of praying day and night without ceasing ?

Ans. 1. It implieth constancy in the practice of this duty. Thus when it is said, *Pray without ceasing*, 1 Thes. 5. 17. i.e. don't begin to practise the duty, and afterwards leave off ; but hold out all your dayes therein. It is the same with that, *Eph. 6. 18. Praying with all perseverance.* So that Phrase of night and day, intends the same thing, *Rev. 7. 15. They serve him day and night in his Temple*, h. e. continually and without intermission. Thus *Isai. 62. 6. The Watchmen of Jerusalem shall not hold their peace day nor night*, h. e. they shall hold on in their duty. Time you know is divided

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ded into day and night. If then a man shall continue to serve God, both by night and by day, then he doth serve him always.

2. It implieth *Frequency*. Those words *without ceasing*, some read *without intermission*. Not but that the duty of Prayer may and must be intermitted, as to actual performance, that so other duties as to our general or particular calling may be attended, but the spirit of the duty should not be intermitted, Christians must be careful that they never lose that: There ought to be an habitual inclination, and readiness to attend the duty of Prayer, whenever called thereunto: Also, there should be a frequency therein, as to actual performance. And when it is said, that a man should pray in secret, *day and night*, that implieth, that he should do so very often, *Psal:1.2. 1 Thess. 3.10*. Indeed secret Prayer should be every mans daily practice. Therefore when Christ bid his Disciples pray in secret, he bids them say, *Give us this day, &c.* Mat. 6.6, 11. from whence we may infer that secret Prayer should be a Christians daily practice.

It is not determined in the Scripture, how often every man must pray in secret: only that he ought to do thus daily. We find that *Daniels* constant course was to pray by himself three times every day, *Dan. 6. 10.* And *David* saith, that he did praise God *seven times a day*, h. e. often times, *Psal. 119. 164.* And there is great reason that men should offer Prayers and praises before God in secret, at least once every day, and once every night; so may they be said to pray without ceasing day and night.

We come now to enquire into the Reasons of this Doctrine.

Reas. 1. *From the consideration of the omnipresence of God.* He seeth and hears what is done not only in publick Assemblies, and in Families, but in Closets, *Jer. 23. 24.* *Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord, do I not fill Heaven and Earth?* This reason is urged as an Argument for secret Prayer, even because our Heavenly Father *seeth in secret*, *Mat. 6. 6.* If Men do not practice this Duty, it argueth great Atheism, and

and that they do not really, and with their whole hearts, believe the omnipresence of God; so by the practice hereof, they testifie that they have the sense of this Truth upon their hearts; therefore should they pray in secret.

Reas. 2. *Because there are many requests fit and necessary to be mentioned before the Lord in secret, that may not be expressed before others, e. g.* Requests concerning a man's particular wants, which may press him, and oppress him: and concerning his secret sins which he hath been guilty of before the Lord. If God by his providence hath kept a mans sins from the knowledge of the World, he would sin grievously in divulging his own secret sins, and yet as ever he doth desire the pardon of them, or the salvation of his Soul, he must confess and bewail them before God in secret places: in which respect, secret Prayer is necessary. Again, a Child of God may be molested with the prevalency of some particular corruption or temptation, which it is not meet to speak of before others, yet it concerns him to cry
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unto God day and night for power against it. There are also requests which may respect particular persons, whose cases and circumstances may be such as others should not know of; upon which account also prayer in secret is necessary. There are some that a man may have special reason to pray for them in his secret addresses to the throne of grace, as *Paul* for *Timothy*. There are also some that we ought to pray against them, viz. special and implacable Enemies of the Lords Name and People, whom it may not be convenient to mention whilst others are in hearing; but we should put the Lord in mind of them, and those Arrows which are shot out of Closets, will at last fall upon them, and smite them down into the pit.

Reas. 3. *Equity requireth this from the Lords Servants.* He brings them into his Chambers, *Cant. 1.4. The King has brought me into his Chambers.* Therefore they ought to bring him into their Chambers. There is a secret providence of God at work for them continually, *Psal. 31. 20. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence,*
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thou shalt keep them secretly in a Pavilion, Shall the Lord hide his Servants in those Chambers of safety which he hath prepared for them? And shall not they pray unto him and praise him in their secret Chambers? Yea, and as for sincere Believers, the Lord hath provided Chambers for them in his house, even in the Palace Royal of Heaven, there to praise his Name for evermore. Therefore in the meantime they should praise him and pray unto him day and night in their Chambers here. The Lord said unto the Prophet *Zechariah,* *If thou wilt keep my charge, I will give thee places to walk amongst these that stand by,* Zech: 3: 7: Intimating that the faithful Servants of God, shall one day walk in the Galleries of Heaven, amongst the holy Angels that are there. It is but reason then, that they should bring the Lord into their Closets here upon earth.

USE. I. *Of Reprehension :*

I: *To them that neglect secret Prayer.*

Are there not many whose Consciences are smiting them whilst the word of
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the Lord is speaking to them. How many Children, and young ones that never go alone to Pray! You Children did you this day go, and the last night go alone to pray? yea, and there are elder ones, that the Chambers they lodge in, will witness against them at the last day, for living in the neglect of secret Prayer before the Lord. They are many times alone whole nights together, but as it is said of the wicked, *God is not in all their thoughts.* Well, be assured, if ever God intend mercy to thy soul, he will make thee get alone to pray, and to pour out thy Soul in his presence. For (as I have formerly shewed) in Conversion, that's one of the first things, a poor sinner begins to be in earnest in his Secret Prayers and cries to heaven. As it was said of *Paul*, whilest in the pangs of the new Birth, *Act. 9.11. Behold he Prayeth*, so if the Lord convert and save thy Soul, *Behold thou wilt pray in secret.*

2. This Reproof belongs to them also, *who are not frequent and constant in the practice of this duty.* Alas! I know there have

have been many that the Word of the Lord hath met with them; they have been Sermon-sick, and then they would pray in secret; but they have not done thus without ceasing. Their *Convictions* have died, and they became as *Prayerless* as ever in their lives before. Or it may be some distressing affliction or other, hath brought them upon their *Knees* before the Lord. Like those in *Isai. 26. 16.* *Lord, in trouble they visited thee, they poured out a Prayer, when thy chastening was upon them.* Ah! Lord God, hath it not been thus, with many a soul that *hears me* this day? but their *distresses* being removed, they continue not in secret Prayer. Oh consider what the Scripture saith, *Heb. 10. 38.* *If any draw back, my Soul shall have no pleasure in him.* To begin a course of Prayer, and then to leave off again, *is to draw back.* Will the Lord take pleasure in such? He hath said, he will not. And yet I wish there be not Professors of Religion, Church-members, whose Consciences do (or may) accuse them for inconstancy in the performance of this great duty of secret prayer.

prayer : If thou art such an one, thou hast on thee one of the sad marks of an Hypocrite : for it is said of the Hypocrite, *Will he alwayes call upon God ?* Job 27:10: I wonder how such men and women, can think that they belong to God, or that they have a real interest in Heaven, who can find in their hearts to live without secret communion with him : especially considering, that the Scripture tells them that he that shall allow himself in the wilful breach of the least Commandment, shall not be admitted, nor accounted of in the Kingdom of Heaven, *Mat: 5: 19:* where then will they appear, who live in the neglect of so great a Commandment as this of *Secret Prayer* is?

3: *This reproveth those that instead of Praying in secret are sinning in secret:* The Apostle saith, it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of some in secret, *Eph: 5: 12:* How do wretched sinners bleis themselves, if they can sin out of the sight of men : especially as to that iniquity of which it is said, *That the abhorred of the Lord shall fall into it :* They commit

commit Adultery, and other sorts of unclean Abominations in secret places: or they live in secret *Self-pollution*, which is commonly the young-mans sin; an evil condemned in the Scripture, under the Name of *Uncleanness*, and sometimes under the Name of *Effeminateness*; and the Word of the Lord saith, that whoever liveth in it, shall certainly be excluded out of the Kingdom of Heaven. Instead of mourning and bleeding in secret places that ever thou hast been guilty of this sin, dost thou still live in it? then woe to thy soul. There are two things which I am sure thou dost not remember as thou shouldst do.

1. Thou dost not remember that the all-seeing eye of an infinite God looketh upon thee. If a Child of seven years old saw thee, thou wouldst be afraid and ashamed to commit that sin; and wouldst thou do it, if thou didst behold God looking on thee?

2. Neither dost thou remember the day of Judgment. For then every secret thing whether it be good or whether it be evil

will be brought to light, *Eccles. 12.14.* If thou didst believe, that all the World should one day hear of that secret sin of thine, wouldst thou commit it? certainly if Men considered this, they would sin in secret less, and pray in secret more.

USE II. Of Exhortation, *to follow the Apostles Example, by being much in the practice of this Duty of secret Prayer.*

Do but consider, the good and benefit which will follow. Whoever is sincere therein shall find that his secret Prayers have not been lost labour. A Man may thereby obtain mercy for his own Soul: even Grace and spiritual blessings. *Solomons* Wisdom was given to him as an Answer unto his secret Prayers. Comfort and assurance of Gods favour may in this way be obtained: you that complain, you have not assurance of your Salvation, consider of it. There have been those (I could tell you of marvelous instances to this purpose) that when they have been upon their knees in secret, the holy Spirit hath broke in upon their Souls with everlasting Consolation. Yea, a Man by secret

cret Prayer may obtain mercy for his Family. The lives of all *Jacobs* Children were spared, in answer to their Fathers Prayers in secret. Nay, more, one righteous man by Prayer in secret, may be a means to divert Judgment, and to obtain mercy for the whole Town, and Land where he dwells. How far did *Abraham* by his Prayers in secret prevail for *Sodom*; and *Moses* for *Israel*? And what mercy did *Elijah* and *Amos* obtain for the whole Land by their secret Prayers?

And truly they are the persons who are like to experience special mercy in the evil day. They that pray much in secret and that mourn continually in secret places, because of the sins of the times, shall experience if not temporal (that which is better) spiritual preservations in a day of general Calamity, *Ezek. 9.4 Jer. 13.17.*

For Direction here;

I. *Be very particular in secret Prayer.* Men should in secret before the Lord, often bewail every sin they have been guilty of, whilst in a state of Unregeneracy. As to the kind of sin, that is, though it may

be the acts of sin have been so often iterated, as 'tis not possible to mention them all particularly. And if after Conversion they fall into evils, for which Conscience condemns them, they should particularly acknowledge those sins in their secret addresses unto the Throne of Grace, begging for the Pardon of them. Particular Plagues of Heart should be mourned for in secret: so there are particular mercies to be prayed for; and particular Friends (near Relations especially) which ought to be remembered in secret Prayers day and night without ceasing. Personal and particular concerns are to be enlarged upon in closet Prayer especially.

2. *Take heed of resting in the external performance of this Duty.* Do not think that you must needs be saved, meerly because you Pray in secret. You especially who are the Children of Godly Parents, and have ever practised this Duty, because of the frequent Exhortations, and Examples which have been set before you. Oh rest not here, without experiencing a work of true Faith and Regeneration in your Souls.

Souls. Remember, that though a man cannot be sincere, if he live in the neglect of so great a Duty, yet he may continue in the practice of it, after a formal manner (as *Paul* before his Conversion did, *Phil.* 3.6. *Luk.* 18.14. and for all that, remain in a state of Hypocrisie. Nor indeed is there any duty, but an Hypocrite may attend it without ceasing, as to the external part of the Duty. Wherefore, beware of taking up with that.

3. *Labour after intimacy of Communion with God therein.* Its true, we must remember our distance, considering that God is in Heaven, and we are on Earth. He is an infinite Majesty, and we are poor inconsiderable Dust-heaps; and therefore may not forget that we are dust and ashes, when we take upon us to speak unto the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Nevertheless he alloweth us to be humbly familiar with his divine Majesty. An holy man upon his Death-bed could say, *If the walls of this Chamber could speak, they would testify how often I have met with God here; and how familiar he hath been with my Soul.* Oh labour

labour after that, to know by blessed experience, what it is to have intimate communion with God in Closets, and to be familiar with the Lord Jesus there.

4. *Practice other Duties in secret, which are an help to Prayer.* e. g. Self-Examination is a great help unto secret Prayer. When a man upon Examination and serious reflections upon himself, seeth what his defects have been and are; and withal perceiveth what God hath done for his Soul, he must needs thereby be quickened in his calling upon the Name of the Lord. And read the Scriptures daily in secret; and having so done, meditate and ponder upon what you have read; and then fall upon your knees before the Lord, and pour out your very hearts in his presence: And know for your encouragement, that your secret Prayers shall one day be rewarded openly, *Mat. 6. 6.* When you come to die, you will not repent of the time that hath been thus spent. Nor at the last day, when the Lord Jesus will openly before *all the World* speak of the secret Prayers (as well as secret Alms-deeds) of
his

his Servants. O how *glorious will it be* when Christ shall say (as sometimes to *Nathaniel*) I saw thee every day and night upon thy knees in thy *Closet* ; I bestowed mercy on others out of respect to thy Prayers, and brought about great changes in the World, in answer thereunto ? *Blessed is that Servant whom the Lord shall find thus doing.*

F I N I S.

Some | Important Truths | concerning | Conversion, | And the | Improving Seasons of Grace; | As also about | Prayer in Families, and in Secret: | Delivered in Several | Sermons; | — | By Mr. Increase Mather. | — | The Second Edition. | — | [Two lines from John xiii. 17; and two lines from Phil. iii. 1.] | — || Printed at Boston in New-England by | Samuel Green for John Griffin.

1684. 16mo. pp. (1), (2), 151.

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was published originally in

London in 1674. A reference to the publication is found in

the list of Mather's Works, given in Mr. Silbey's "Biographi-

cal Sketches of Graduates of Harvard University" (I. 439),

immediately after the title of the London edition, as follows:

London in 1674. A reference to the publication is found in the list of Mather's Works, given in Mr. Sibley's "Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Harvard University" (I. 439), immediately after the title of the London edition, as follows: "The same. 2d ed. Boston. 1684. pp. 151." Without doubt Mr. Sibley took this entry from the manuscript catalogue of early New-England Books and Tracts, made by Thomas Prince, where a similar description of the book is given; but he does not, under his customary Capitals, mention any library fortunate enough to own a copy. It is highly probable that Mr. Prince made the entry in his catalogue from this very volume, as on the *verso* of the titlepage is written, in his well-known hand, "T. Prince. Boston. 1720. — 1^s 6^d." On the *recto* of the front fly-leaf is written "Jo. Baily's Booke pre. 0-1-6. N. E. Feb. 21. 8 $\frac{4}{5}$." At this date John Baily was assistant to Mr. Willard of the Old South Church, and a little later was the minister of Watertown. His signature is found on ten or twelve titles that have been already described in the Early American Imprints, and the signatures all were written very near the same time.

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